

“A Fortress of the Soviet Home Front”:
Mobilization and Ethnicity in Kazakhstan during World War II

By

Roberto José Carmack

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The dissertation is approved by the following members of the Final Oral Committee:

Francine Hirsch, Professor, History
David McDonald, Professor History
Uli Schamiloglu, Professor, Languages and Cultures of Asia
Kathryn Ciancia, Assistant Professor, History
John W. Hall, Assistant Professor, History

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Abstract

After the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, the Soviet leadership fully mobilized Kazakhstan's populations for war. Communist Party and government officials in Moscow and Almaty responded to this crisis by conscripting ethnic Kazakhs into the Red Army, mobilizing the republic's industrial workers and collective farmers for intensified production, and waging a grandiose propaganda campaign designed to instill Soviet patriotism in these soldiers and laborers. During the war, Soviet authorities also deported large Soviet German and North Caucasian populations to Kazakhstan, where local Party and government officials forced them to eke out a desperate existence on the Gulag's "special-settlements." This dissertation is the first English-language study that analyzes these wartime mobilizational campaigns inside Kazakhstan. Drawing on a wide range of previously unexamined archival holdings in Kazakhstan and Moscow, published documentary collections, Soviet newspapers, and memoirs, the dissertation argues that mobilization catalyzed the integration of the republic's population into Soviet military, economic, and ideological institutions. As a direct result of this integration, the republic's Kazakh population acquired a much stronger Soviet identity, but the boundaries of Kazakhstan's ethnic hierarchy became more pronounced and the republic's status as a raw materials base for Russia became more firmly entrenched.

By analyzing conscription and military service among ethnic Kazakhs, economic mobilization in Kazakhstan's factories and collective farms, propaganda, labor mobilization among Soviet German and North Caucasian deportees, and the repressive activities of the state security services, this work contributes to the existing historiography on Central Asia, the Soviet Union, and World War II in several ways. First, this dissertation demonstrates that wartime mobilization was a crucial factor in the consolidation of Sovietized local identities in

Kazakhstan. Second, the dissertation sheds a great deal of light on the institutional culture of the Stalinist Soviet Union by demonstrating that the practice of bureaucratic scapegoating became integral to the functioning of the Soviet administrative system thanks to the stresses engendered by total war. Finally, this dissertation contributes to our understanding of how the war influenced policies towards ethnic minorities in the Soviet Union and how the conflict catalyzed political, economic, and ideological changes in the multiethnic Soviet empire.

Glossary of Terms

Agitprop: Agitation and propaganda. Agitation was generally spoken and propaganda was usually conveyed in written form. The Communist Party used agitprop as a key medium for spreading its ideological message to the Soviet population.

ASSR: Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. A territorial and administrative unit below the SSR.

Aul: Traditionally, a nomadic Kazakh community. After the collectivization of the Kazakh countryside in the early 1930s, the term was widely used to refer to a settled Kazakh village.

Bai: A Kazakh “rich man”. Traditionally, a clan elder who controlled a large number of livestock. During the early 1930s, Soviet officials launched a campaign of “*debaization*” designed to destroy them as a class.

Delo: An archival file in former Soviet states containing documents.

GKO: The State Defense Committee. The supreme governing authority in the Soviet Union during the Great Patriotic War.

Komsomol: The Communist Youth League. The primary task of this body was to prepare young people for future membership in the Communist Party, but during the war, it also oversaw a variety of tasks related to mobilization. The League was divided into all-Union and republican branches.

Military commissariats: Offices under NKO jurisdiction responsible for preparing Soviet citizens for military service and inducting conscripts and volunteers into army units.

MTS: Machine Tractor Station. These state enterprises were located on state farms. Their primary function was to store and manage farm equipment, but they also acted as centers of Communist Party authority in the Soviet countryside.

NKGB: The People’s Commissariat of State Security. The principal counter-intelligence organ of the Soviet Union.

NKO: The Commissariat of Defense. The principal government organ tasked with raising Red Army units and administering the Red Army and Navy.

NKVD: The People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs. The Soviet secret police organ from 1934 to 1946

OGPU: The Joint State Political Administration. The Soviet secret police organ from 1923 to 1934.

PURKKA: The Main Political Administration of the Red Army. Administered by the Soviet Communist Party and responsible for conducting agitprop among soldiers.

RSFSR: The Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. The largest republic in the Soviet Union.

SAVO: The Central Asian Military District. A zone of military administration that encompassed the Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tajik, Turkmen, and Uzbek SSRs.

Soviet: Soviets of Laborers' Deputies. The most basic government organ in the Soviet Union that ultimately answered to the all-Union and republican Sovnarkoms.

Sovnarkom: The Council of People's Commissars. A government organ in charge of managing the people's commissariats. Essentially the Soviet government. In addition to the Soviet Sovnarkom, Sovnarkoms operated in all SSRs.

SSR: Soviet Socialist Republic. The largest territorial-administrative unit in the Soviet Union. At the beginning of the Great Patriotic War in 1941, the Soviet Union contained 16 SSRs.

Turksib: The Turkestan-Siberian Railway. The principal railroad network connecting Siberia and Central Asia. Completed during the First Five-Year Plan

Note on Translations and Transliterations

All translations in this dissertation are mine unless otherwise indicated. I have transliterated Russian names and words using the Library of Congress system. However, I have rendered well-known Russian names and terms using traditional transliterations rather than the Library of Congress system, for example Trotskyism rather than Trotskizm. Kazakh words in the dissertation are transliterated using the Library of Congress system for non-Slavic languages in Cyrillic Script. I use the proper Kazakh transliteration for Kazakh names rather than the Russian transliteration, for example Ondasynov rather than Undasynov. I have attempted to transliterate North Caucasian and German names written in Russian in a way that reflects their language of origin as closely as possible. In cases where there was no indication of the original transliteration in the document in question, I have rendered these names using the Russian version. In this dissertation, I have written all place names in Kazakhstan using the Kazakh rather than Russian version, for example Semei instead of Semipalatinsk. The Kazakh SSR was a national republic and the Kazakh version of place names was official alongside the Russian version. For this reason, when writing in English there is no good reason to privilege the Russian over the Kazakh version of cities, provinces, and districts.

Introduction

“German fascism has declared war on the Soviet Union!” This was the clarion call of the Central Committee of the Kazakh Communist Party at its Fifth plenary session of June 25-26, 1941.¹ The members of the plenum resolved that the Kazakh Communist Party would respond decisively to this crisis by “restructuring the entire life the republic to a military footing [*voennyi lad*]”.² The republic’s Party and government bureaucracies were to subordinate their administrative, economic, and ideological work to the needs of the Soviet war effort. In addition, Kazakhstan’s workers were to intensify the production of coal and other critical resources,³ Party propagandists would intensify agitprop on Kazakhstan’s collective farms to boost agricultural production,⁴ and conscription would commence in cities and in the countryside.⁵ According to the Kazakh Communist Party Plenum, the republic was to become a vital contributor to the Soviet war effort and a “mighty fortress of the Soviet home front.”⁶

These wartime mobilizational campaigns catalyzed Kazakhstan’s administrative, economic, and ideological integration into the Soviet Union. From 1941 to 1945, a least one million ethnic Kazakhs served on the frontlines of the Great Patriotic War and acquired a

¹ A. P. Akhmetov et al., *Kommunisticheskaia partiia (bol'shevikov) Kazakhstana v rezolutsiakh i resheniakh s'ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK, iun' 1937-1948* (Alma-Ata, 1984) vol. 3, 206.

² Gaziz Abishev, *Kazakhstan v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine, 1941-1945* (Alma-Ata, 1958), 33-34.

³ Akhmetov, *Kommunisticheskaia partiia (bol'shevikov) Kazakhstana v rezolutsiakh i resheniakh s'ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK*, vol. 3, 206.

⁴ Ibid, 206-212.

⁵ In Soviet parlance agitation referred to oral political education and propaganda referred to printed political education. In practice, Communist party officials often conflated these two terms, hence the heavy use of the term “agitprop” in party documentation.

⁶ Ibid.

firsthand look at the vast Soviet Motherland.⁷ During this period, the Soviet leadership in Moscow intensified its control over the republic's economy and workforce in order to boost economic production. The People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD) contributed to this political and economic centralization by increasing surveillance and strengthening the Soviet Union's brutal disciplinary regime inside the republic. The NKVD vigorously applied its repressive measures to Kazakhstan's Slavic and Central Asian populations, but NKVD officers also expanded their campaign of terror to encompass "enemy nations" deported wholesale to the region from 1941 to 1945. Mobilization, in short, catalyzed the Sovietization of the Kazakh republic by tying its populations more firmly to Soviet military, economic, and repressive structures than had been the case during the prewar decades.

During the war, Party and government officials in Moscow and Almaty intensified several campaigns that they launched in the 1930s in order to Sovietize Kazakhstan's multinational population. In this sense, the war years did not mark a decisive break with the republic's prewar history. As part of its wartime mobilizational campaigns, the Communist Party launched several propaganda offensives designed to convince the republic's Slavs and Central Asians that they were fighting and laboring to defend a socialist "friendship" based on Marxist-Leninist notions of equality between the Soviet peoples and the various national republics that constituted the Soviet Union. The mobilizational strategies pursued by Party and government officials in Moscow and Kazakhstan, however, belied this narrative. Rather than increasing solidarity between the republic's national groups as Party propagandists claimed, military and labor mobilization deepened existing national inequalities inside the republic and

⁷ In this dissertation, I use the word Kazakh to refer to Kazakhstan's indigenous population. The term Kazakhstani is a geographic signifier that designates any person from Kazakhstan regardless of his or her nationality.

magnified Kazakhstan's bureaucratic and economic subordination to governing bodies in Moscow.

The Kazakh Steppe and the Kazakh Republic before the Great Patriotic War: From Piecemeal Integration to Mobilization

The Kazakhs in the Russian Empire

By the time Russian military forces and merchants entered the Kazakh steppe in the late 18th century, Russian sovereigns and imperial administrators already had considerable experience interacting with nomadic non-Christian peoples. In the eyes of imperial officials, the subjugation of the Nogais, Bashkirs, Kalmyks, and other Eurasian peoples was proof positive that the sedentary and Orthodox culture of the Russians was superior to that of the steppe's Muslim and Buddhist peoples.⁸ Russian officials brought this sense of superiority to the Kazakh steppe. The Russian Empire and the Kazakh hordes shared a common Mongol political heritage,⁹ but the two peoples had little else in common. Unlike the Muslim and nomadic Kazakhs, Russian officials framed their identities in mostly European terms, especially after the Petrine revolution of the

⁸ The historian Michael Khodarkovsky argues that Russian imperial officials consciously applied the lessons they learned during the subjugation of the Mongol Kalmyks during the 18th century to the colonization of the Kazakh steppe. See Khodarkovsky, *Where Two Worlds Met: The Russian State and the Kalmyk Nomads, 1600-1771* (Ithaca, 1992), 218-200. Many of the same misunderstandings that flared up between the Russians and Kalmyks during the 18th century resurfaced between the Russians and Kazakhs during the 19th century. For example, tsarist officials viewed the Kalmyks and Kazakhs as subjects responsible for furnishing troops and taxes to the imperial state, but Kalmyk tayshis and Kazakh sultans generally saw their relationship with the Russians as an alliance between equals. *Ibid.*, 68.

⁹ The principality of Muscovy emerged as a tributary of the Golden Horde, which was itself a Mongol successor polity. Even after Muscovy achieved full sovereignty in 1480, Muscovite leaders continued employing a Chingisid political language in their interactions with the other polities that split from the Mongol world empire. For the tension between the Mongol and Byzantine heritage in Muscovite political ideology, see Michael Cherniavsky, "Khan or Basileus: An Aspect of Russian Mediaeval Political Theory," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 20 (4) (1959): 459-476. For an excellent overview of the diplomatic and military maneuvering between the Mongol successor polities that led to Russian domination over the Eurasian steppe, see Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800* (Bloomington, 2001), 76-183. Qasym khan most likely established the Kazakh Khanate in the early 16th century. By the early 18th century the Kazakh Khanate had separated into three hordes (Small, Middle, and Great) ruled by sultans. Martha Brill Olcott, *The Kazakhs* (Stanford, 1995), 9-13.

early 18th century.¹⁰ As late as 1866, Russian imperial officials and Central Asian notables referenced their shared Chingisid heritage in an effort to find common cultural ground,¹¹ but these should most properly be viewed as tactical moves designed to cement military and economic alliances. The major impetus for the influx of Slavic peasants and imperial administrators onto the Kazakh steppe was the pursuit of land, and this flood of Slavic colonizers turned into a torrent after the abolition of serfdom in 1861. According to one authoritative estimate, 1,500,000 colonists settled on the Kazakh steppe from 1896 to 1916 in an effort to acquire profitable farmland.¹² Throughout the 19th century, the seizure of grazing lands by Slavic settlers triggered a series of increasingly violent uprisings that culminated in the rebellion of 1916 – a massive conflagration that spread throughout Russian Central Asia and killed tens of thousands of Russian soldiers, Slavic colonists, native guerillas, and indigenous nomads and farmers.¹³

Violence was the primary tool that Russian colonial authorities used to enforce their authority on the Kazakh steppe, but force was never the sole arbiter of cultural difference

¹⁰ For the symbolic importance of Peter I's Westernizing measures, see Richard S. Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy, From Peter the Great to the Abdication of Nicholas II* (Princeton, 2006), 26-29. The historian of Central Asia Adeeb Khalid has convincingly argued that 19th century Russian officials did harbor Orientalist attitudes towards their Asian and Muslim subjects and believed that they occupied a higher civilizational plane. In his estimation, an identity that posited Europe as the apex of human development superseded any "special affinity for Asia" on the part of Russian imperial officials. Adeeb Khalid, "Russian History and the Debate over Orientalism," *Kritika*, vol. 1 (4) (Fall 2000): 691-699. It is important to keep in mind, however, that the line between colonizers and colonized on the Eurasian steppe and Central Asia was not always clear. For example, imperial administrators often viewed Slavic migrants who arrived here during the late 19th century as just as poor, superstitious, and unclean as native Central Asians, if not more so. See Jeff Sahadeo, *Russian Colonial Society in Tashkent, 1865-1923* (Bloomington, 2007), 116-120.

¹¹ In August 1866, seventy religious and secular elites in Tashkent submitted an address to the "White Tsar" requesting the "unification" of Turkestan with Russia. Robert D. Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (Cambridge, 2006), 253-254.

¹² George J. Demko, *The Russian Colonization of Kazakhstan, 1896-1916* (Bloomington, 1969), 2.

¹³ Edward Dennis Sokol, *The Revolt of 1916 in Russian Central Asia* (Baltimore, 1954), 158-161.

between Russians and Kazakhs. Imperial administrators created a complex legal framework for administering their Kazakh subjects, and especially after the promulgation of the Great Reforms in the early 1860s, these administrators began absorbing some aspects of Kazakh customary law into their legal regime while stifling others.¹⁴ During the late 19th century, imperial administrators were acknowledging Kazakh historical traditions and nomadic customs deemed compatible with “civil virtue”. By incorporating these customs into their legal and administrative regime, Russian officials hoped to integrate the Kazakhs into a larger imperial-civic culture.¹⁵ These official efforts at integration were successful, but only partially. A small but active native intelligentsia was active on the Kazakh steppe by the late 19th century, and over the decades, many of these intellectuals became increasingly optimistic about the future place of the Kazakhs in Russia’s multiethnic society. For members of the Kazakh intelligentsia like Chokan Valikhanov and Ybyrai Altynsarin, membership in a liberalized Russian state would lay the foundation for overcoming the educational and cultural “backwardness” of the Kazakh nomads.¹⁶ These intellectuals, however, never realized their visions for “modernizing” their

¹⁴ For example, during the 1860s Russian lawmakers allowed Kazakh litigants to use indigenous *bi* courts instead of Russian courts in order to resolve legal disputes. Although most Russian lawmakers on the steppe sought to convince the Kazakhs to adopt Russian legal norms, these officials would not abolish the *bi* courts for fear of sparking resistance. This was part of a strategy for gradually assimilating the Kazakhs into Russian legal culture. Virginia Martin, “Kazakh Oath-Taking in Colonial Courtrooms Legal Culture and Russian-Empire Building,” *Kritika*, vol. 5 (3): Summer 2004), 483-514. Imperial judicial officials were less tolerant towards the Kazakh custom of honor killings (*barymta*), but it was so central to Kazakh customary practice that they could not eliminate it by fiat. Ibid, “Barımta. Nomadic Custom, Imperial Crime,” in Daniel R. Brower and Edward J. Lazzarini, *Russia’s Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700-1917* (Bloomington, 1997), 249-270.

¹⁵ Dov Yaroshevski, “Empire and Citizenship,” in Brower, *Russia’s Orient*, 58-79.

¹⁶ There were, of course, important differences between the ideas of Kazakh intellectuals such as Valikhanov and Altynsarin. For example, Valikhanov advocated Russian-language instruction for the Kazakhs, while Altynsarin preferred to make Kazakh the language of instruction in a European-style education system. One thing that Kazakh “Westernizers” had in common, however, was that they adhered to a culturally universalist conception of progress that upheld Russia as the object of emulation. In their estimation, the Kazakhs would eventually reach the civilizational level of the Russians, and in the process shed their status as primitive nomads and become full-fledged subject-citizens of the Russian Empire. Peter Rottier, “Creating the Kazak Nation: The Intelligentsia’s Quest for Acceptance in the Russian Empire, 1905-1920”. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Wisconsin – Madison, 2005,

Kazakh brethren. The effort to pull the Kazakhs into “modernity” would continue after the 1917 Revolutions, but socialist radicals would undertake this effort under the red banner of the Bolsheviks.

The Kazakh Republic before the Great Patriotic War

After the Bolsheviks overthrew the Provisional Government in February 1917, the influential members of the Kazakh intelligentsia Ālikhan Bōkeikhan, Akhmet Baitūrsynūly, and Mīrzhayyp Dulatūly formed the nationalist Alash Orda government in an effort to establish an autonomous state and protect the Kazakh people from the Bolshevik and White forces assembling on the steppe.¹⁷ The geopolitical position of the Alash Orda government was precarious in the extreme. Sandwiched between the Red Army and the forces of the White Admiral Kolchak, the Alash Orda leaders soon had little choice but to ally with the Reds to prevent the Whites from seizing control of the Kazakh steppe and destroying the Kazakh autonomous government.¹⁸ The consolidation of this alliance came at a steep cost, however. After the Red Army defeated Kolchak in early 1920, the Alash Orda leaders found themselves without the soldiers and supplies needed to contest Bolshevik control of the steppe. With their White enemies utterly defeated and the nationalists militarily impotent, the Bolsheviks proceeded

211-259. See also Gulnar Kendirbaeva, “‘We are Children of Alash...’ The Kazakh Intelligentsia at the Beginning of the 20th Century in Search of National Identity and Prospects of the Cultural Survival of the Kazakh People,” *Central Asian Survey* 18 (1): (1999), 5-36.

¹⁷ Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, 137-151.

¹⁸ Gulnar Kendirbay, “The National Liberation Movement of the Kazakh Intelligentsia at the Beginning of the 20th Century,” *Central Asian Survey*, 16 (4): (1997), 487-515.

to impose their brand of socialist order in the newly created Kazakh Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic.¹⁹

English-language research on Soviet Central Asia has focused mostly on Bolshevik nation building in the region during the 1920s and 1930s. There is good reason for this focus – by splitting the Central Asian peoples into several autonomous national republics organized according to linguistic and cultural identity markers, Soviet leaders introduced a method of political administration that was new to the region.²⁰ Both Lenin and Stalin maintained that by creating “socialist nations” in Central Asia and the rest of the Soviet Union, the ethnic antagonisms of the past would be eclipsed in favor a truly internationalist socialist future.²¹ In an explicit effort to differentiate themselves from the tsarist government they had replaced and “bourgeois” nation-states in the rest of the world, the Bolsheviks placed ethnic concerns at the very center of their administrative agenda.²² In the Central Asian republics, the Bolsheviks trained and promoted indigenous Communist Party and government cadres to provide a native face to Soviet power. As part of this indigenization effort, the Kazakh government attempted to reverse the illicit seizure of Kazakh pasturelands by Slavic colonists by expelling these Slavs

¹⁹ In 1920, the Bolsheviks organized the Kazakh territories into the Kyrgyz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, which was renamed the Kazakh ASSR in 1925.d

²⁰ This is not to suggest that Soviet administrators created the Central Asian republics out of whole cloth. Soviet ethnographers and administrators examined a number of markers to differentiate Central Asian groups from each other. These markers included language (especially in the case of Uzbeks and Tajiks), genealogy-based clan identities (in the Turkmen case), and “mode of life” [*byt*], which was especially relevant for differentiating sedentary nationalities like the Uzbeks from nomadic groups like the Kazakhs and Karakalpaks. See Arne Haugen, *The Establishment of National Republics in Soviet Central Asia* (Basingstoke, 2003); Adrienne Lynn Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton, 2004), 17-69; Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca, 2005), 145-186.

²¹ Yuri Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism,” *Slavic Review*, vol. 53 (2): (Summer 1994), 414-452.

²² For an exhaustive treatment of these polices, see Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca, 2001).

from Kazakhstan.²³ This policy was short-lived. By the spring of 1928, the Soviet Communist Party and government began moving large numbers of Slavic immigrants into Kazakhstan in an effort to boost agricultural production.²⁴

Overall, indigenization policies in Central Asia during the 1920s and 1930s achieved rather lackluster success. In Kazakhstan, for example, all of the General Secretaries of the Kazakh Communist Party were Europeans during this period, and there was no Kazakh General Secretary until 1954.²⁵ That said, most Chairmen of the Kazakh Sovnarkom during the 1920s and 1930s were Kazakhs, and during these decades the number of Kazakh regional Party and soviet officials steadily increased.²⁶ Party and government officials, however, did not succeed in bridging the socioeconomic divide between the republic's Slavic and Kazakh populations. Slavic peasants continued to occupy the lands with the most ready access to water, and they were generally wealthier and far more literate than their Kazakh neighbors.²⁷ The Bolsheviks promised to elevate the Kazakhs to the political and socioeconomic status of the Slavs, but this goal eluded them during the 1920s.

²³ Because of this policy, Kazakhstan's Russian population dropped by about 500,000 (20%) from 1920 to 1922. Local Kazakhs carried out the expulsion of these Russians from their farmsteads in such a brutal manner that the OGPU feared the Russians would launch a rebellion in a desperate effort to end the decolonization program. Ibid, 59-67.

²⁴ Ibid, 66.

²⁵ A similar picture emerged in Turkmenistan during the 1920s and 1930s. According to Adriane Edgar, Turkmen inside the Turkmen Communist Party frequently accused the Party apparatus of discriminating against native Communists. Edgar, *Tribal Nation*, 100-128.

²⁶ According to Martha Olcott, the official effort to "Sovietize" Kazakhstan's Party and government apparatuses intensified in 1925 and again after the onset of Stalin's "Revolution from Above" in the early 1930s. See *The Kazakhs*, 204-215. According to Party statistics, about 53% of the members of the Kazakh Communist Party were Kazakhs by 1933. Ibid, 220.

²⁷ Niccolò Pianciola, "Famine in the Steppe: The Collectivization of Agriculture and the Kazakh Herdsmen, 1928-1934," *Cahiers du monde russe* 45 (1-2): (2004), 137-192. In 1928, 92.8% of Kazakhs were illiterate, compared to 64% of Russians in Kazakhstan. Ibid, 147.

Indigenization was an important component of Soviet political strategy in Kazakhstan, but the campaign to pull the Kazakhs into socialist modernity involved much more than creating native territories and administrative institutions. The policies implemented by Communist Party and government authorities in Central Asia were far more invasive than the policies pursued by their tsarist predecessors. In 1928 with the onset of Stalin's "socialist offensive", Soviet authorities accelerated their efforts to eliminate indigenous customs and modes of life deemed incompatible with socialist modernity.²⁸ Education was an important component of these revolutionary campaigns, but so was violence. Ironically, many Soviet policies designed to modernize the Central Asian peoples threatened to destroy the same cultural practices that made them unique nationalities in the first place.²⁹ During the early 1930s, the Uzbek Communist Party waged an aggressive campaign against female veiling, a practice that Party officials considered a relic from the pre-Soviet past that prevented Uzbek women from participating in the building of modern socialist life.³⁰ The frenetic Soviet modernization drive in Kazakhstan was even more invasive. After declaring nomadic pastoralism to be an economically inefficient and primitive mode of life,³¹ Soviet leaders implemented a comprehensive program of forced

²⁸ During the late 1920s, Stalin decided that because the worldwide socialist revolution was not imminent, the Communist Party would have to concentrate on constructing an economically and militarily self-reliant socialist society at home free of all vestiges of the free market. Stalin referred to this shift in revolutionary strategy as a socialist offensive. Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States* (New York, 1998), 151-156.

²⁹ The historian Matt Payne convincingly argues that the simultaneous Soviet stress on creating a Kazakh nation while destroying its cultural particularities was one of the key dilemmas framing Soviet rule in Stalinist Kazakhstan. See Payne, "The Forge of the Kazakh Proletariat? The Turksib, Nativization, and Industrialization during Stalin's First Five-Year Plan" in Suny and Martin (eds.), *State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 223-252.

³⁰ Douglas Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender & Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

³¹ For the debate in Kazakhstan surrounding the economic utility of nomadism that preceded collectivization, see Sarah Isabel Cameron, "The Hungry Steppe: Soviet Kazakhstan and the Kazakh Famine, 1921-1934," doctoral dissertation, Yale University (2010), 25-74. It is worth noting that most Kazakh households did not rely exclusively

collectivization. This campaign succeeded in transforming the Kazakh nomads into collective farmers, but at an enormous cost - from 1930 to 1933, as many as 1.3 million Kazakhs or 40% of the republic's indigenous population starved to death.³²

After the establishment of the Kazakh ASSR in 1925, it became increasingly difficult for Kazakhs inside and outside of the Party and government apparatuses to challenge or modulate the policies of the Soviet regime. In 1926, the Bureau of the Kazakh Communist Party began purging its ranks of prominent members of the Alash Orda like Bökeikhan who had joined in the early 1920s.³³ These purges marked the beginning of a period of repression that culminated in the Great Terror of the late 1930s. From 1937 to 1939, the NKVD arrested and executed most of the high-ranking members of the Kazakh Communist Party. These purges did not just victimize former members of the Alash Orda; they also hit old Bolsheviks like Tūrar Ryskūlov, a prominent Party figure who advocated a more gradual approach to collectivizing the Kazakh nomads and who pressed for a more thoroughgoing nativization of the republic's Party and government apparatuses. The Great Terror in Kazakhstan, like in the Soviet Union as a whole, became a mass phenomenon that encompassed every segment of society, from the General Secretary of the Kazakh Communist Party Levon Mirzoian to the lowliest collective farmer and industrial worker.³⁴ When the intensity of these repressions abated in 1939, Kazakhstan's

on nomadic pastoralism for economic sustenance by the early 1930s. Urban trade and agriculture were common economic practices among Kazakhs, especially among the poorer members of the *aul*. Pianciola, "Famine in the Steppe, 139-1144. The historian Martha Olcott cites compelling evidence that some Kazakh communities became sedentary and began practicing agriculture as early as 1830. By 1860, as many as 10,000 Kazakh households were sedentary. Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, 85.

³² Olcott, "The Collectivization Drive in Kazakhstan," *Russian Review*, vol. 40 (2): (1981), 122-142; Pianciola, "Famine in the Steppe".

³³ Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, 213.

³⁴ M. K. Kozybaev, *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei v piati tomakh* (Almaty, 2010), vol. 4, 426-433.

populations desperately needed a respite from violence and terror. This respite was to be brief, however, because two years later the Kazakh Communist Party and government mobilized these traumatized populations for total war against Nazi Germany.

The Russian word *mobilizatsiia* comes from the French term *mobilisation*, a word that government officials across Europe used widely during and after the Napoleonic Wars to refer to the preparation of men, resources, and morale for military conflict.³⁵ The 1896 edition of Russia's authoritative *Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopedic Dictionary* adhered to this basic definition in most respects.³⁶ According to the *Encyclopedic Dictionary*, mobilization was the process of rapidly bringing the Russian army to a state of battle-readiness by reinforcing existing units, forming new units, and supplying these units with the equipment, supplies, and transportation necessary to wage war. Hypothetically, mobilization could proceed in either a partial [*chastnaia*] or general [*obshchaia*] manner, with the latter meant to encompass the entire territory of the Russian Empire and all of its military forces.³⁷

This brief description of mobilization only mentioned the army and closely connected supply organizations, implying that there was a strong administrative and conceptual distinction between the military and civilian spheres. By the last quarter of the 19th century, however, military officers inside the Russian Empire were blurring this distinction by compiling comprehensive statistics about the civilian population in order to facilitate universal military conscription.³⁸ At the same time, key officials inside the government bureaucracy (especially the

³⁵ Joshua Sanborn, "Family Fraternity, and Nation-Building in Russia, 1905-1925," in Suny, *A State of Nations*, 93-110.

³⁶ F. A. Brokgauz and I. A. Efron, *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'*. (St. Petersburg, 1896) vol. 19, 562.

³⁷ Ibid. According to the dictionary, the models for rapid and well-organized mobilizations were the Prussian campaigns of 1866 and 1870.

Ministry of Internal Affairs), saw mass mobilization as a destabilizing force and something to be avoided. This was especially true after Russia's defeat in its war against Japan intensified oppositions to the autocracy and contributed to revolutionary upheaval in 1905.³⁹ This inherently conservative approach to social management, however, proved incompatible with the mobilizational requirements of twentieth century warfare. After Russia entered World War I in August 1914, the Russian government could no longer maintain a clear-cut administrative and conceptual distinction between the military and civilian spheres. In the historian Joshua Sanborn's estimation, the war marked a decisive turning point in Russian history because it forced the Russian state to intervene aggressively in society to implement mass mobilization.⁴⁰ This intervention took a variety of forms, such as cooperation with civic organizations in order to boost war production to the mass expulsion of "alien" ethnic groups like Russian Germans and Jews from frontline areas.⁴¹ Thanks to these interventionist campaigns, the line between Russia's military and civil spheres broke down completely, never to be fully reconstituted.⁴²

³⁸ The law on universal military conscription came into force in 1874. See Peter Holquist, "To Count, To Extract, and to Exterminate: Population Statistics and Population Politics in Late Imperial and Soviet Russia," in Suny, *A State of Nations*, 111-144.

³⁹ According to Sanborn, an institutional conflict developed between the Ministries of War and Internal Affairs during the last quarter of the 19th century over the role of the state in facilitating mobilization. Whereas the Ministry of War sought to involve civil organizations in mobilization in order to streamline the process, the Ministry of Internal Affairs saw these organizations as a threat to autocratic rule. Sanborn, "Family, Fraternity, and Nation-Building in Russia," 94-95. Before World War I, European governments in general were opposed to long-term mass mobilization because of its potential for destabilizing the social and political status quo. See Jeremy Black, *The Age of Total War, 1860-1945* (Lanham, 2006), 62-63.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 95-96

⁴¹ See Lewis H. Siegelbaum, *The Politics of Industrial Mobilization in Russia, 1914-17: A Study of the War-Industries Committees* (New York, 1983) and Eric Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire: The Campaign Against Enemy Aliens during World War I* (Cambridge MA, 2003).

⁴² In this respect, Russia was contributing to a pan-European phenomenon. During the interwar period, the breakdown in the boundaries between civil society and the military became "one of the intrinsic and central features of European society, one of the cornerstones of the European state, and the origin of modern politics." Michael

The Bolshevik Revolution was born in this interventionist environment, and Communist Party leaders heavily employed the language and practices of total mobilization from the very beginning of their rule. The historian Peter Holquist argues that the Bolsheviks inherited wartime coercion and mobilization as omnipresent tools of statecraft, and these tools dovetailed neatly with the Bolshevik goal of creating a modern socialist society.⁴³ The language of military mobilization permeated the discourse of key Soviet officials during the 1920s. According to the prominent military thinker and Red Army head Mikhail Frunze, the distinction between front and home front had disappeared in the new age of total war.⁴⁴ Frunze argued that because Leninist theory and political doctrine demanded close coordination between government and social institutions under the centralized direction of the Communist Party, it was the ideal political system for implementing mass mobilization.⁴⁵ Frunze envisioned a social and political system that the historian Mark von Hagen refers to as “militarized socialism” – a society where “militarist and socialist values” would be fully “interpenetrated”.⁴⁶ When Frunze articulated his

Geyer, “The Militarization of Europe, 1941-1945,” in John R. Gillis, *The Militarization of the Western World* (New Brunswick, 1989), 70-71.

⁴³ Peter Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution: Russia's Continuum of Crisis, 1914-1921* (Cambridge MA, 2002).

⁴⁴ The historian Jeremy Black refers to the period from 1860 to 1945 as the age of total war. During this period, Western powers dramatically increased the intensity of warfare by involving far more people and resources in military conflicts than ever before. One of the results of this universalization of military conflict was a dramatic increase in violence towards civilians. Black, *The Age of Total War*, 62-63.

⁴⁵ David R. Stone, “Mobilization and the Red Army's Move into Civil Administration, 1925-31,” *Kritika* vol. 4 (2): (2003), 343-367.

⁴⁶ Mark von Hagen, *Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship: The Red Army and the Soviet Socialist State, 1917-1930* (Ithaca, 1990), 1-9. This merging of the military and civilian spheres was an aspect of a specifically Russian/Soviet version of modernity. This modernity was unique, but it also had much in common with sociopolitical processes in Germany, Japan, the United States, and other countries during the interwar period. For example, in all four countries there was a veritable obsession with scientific industrial management and using mass media to shape public opinion. Stephen Kotkin, “Modern Times: The Soviet Union and the Interwar Conjuncture,” *Kritika* 2.1 (2001), 111-164.

theories during the early 1920s, he asserted that the Soviet Union was well on the way to achieving this militarized socialism.⁴⁷

The Soviet administrative system, and Soviet society as a whole, became even more militarized and oriented towards mobilization after Stalin launched his socialist offensive in 1928. As the 1930s progressed, the Soviet Communist Party made increasing use of force to boost the country's industrial and military capacity to defend the Soviet Union against foreign military threats. During this decade, the tenets of "martial law socialism" framed the contours and content of Party and government policies in every Soviet region, including Kazakhstan.⁴⁸ Soviet leaders intended for the collectivization of the Kazakh *aul*, the integration of Kazakhs into the industrial workforce, and the institution of draconian labor laws enforced by the police to create a compliant population that would contribute to the development of the Soviet economy. During the prewar decade, the Kazakh Communist Party and government continued to insist that the Kazakhs were a distinct nationality with their own language, way of life, and history.⁴⁹ At the same time, the republic's leaders insisted that the Kazakhs were part of the Soviet "family of nations." As members of this fraternal community, Soviet leaders asserted that the Kazakhs had a responsibility to contribute to "the building of socialism" by maintaining a high level of economic productivity, defending the Soviet Union in the armed forces, and maintaining ideological fidelity to the Communist Party and Soviet government.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Stone, "Mobilization and the Red Army's Move into Civil Administration," 345.

⁴⁸ For the concept of "martial law socialism" see David R. Shearer, *Policing Stalin's Socialism: Repression and Social Order in the Soviet Union, 1924-1953* (New Haven, 2009), 7-8.

⁴⁹ Payne, "The Forge of the Kazakh Proletariat," 227-233.

⁵⁰ In this dissertation, I use the historian Lewis H. Siegelbaum's definition of economic productivity as "output per fixed unit of working time" in an economic enterprise. Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the USSR, 1935-1941* (Cambridge UK, 1988), 7.

Party and government leaders had succeeded in establishing the institutional and ideological foundations for the mass mobilization of the Kazakhs before the beginning of the Great Patriotic War in June 1941. This war constituted the direst threat to the Soviet Union since the Civil War that ended nineteen years previously. In just twelve weeks, the Nazis and their allies overran Belarus, Ukraine, and the Baltic Republics, placing them in ideal positions to threaten Moscow and Leningrad.⁵¹ After the loss of so many heavily populated and economically productive territories, the survival of the Soviet Union hinged on the ability of Party and government authorities to mobilize Kazakhstan and other “Eastern” regions for combat and labor.⁵² Kazakhstan’s population was about 6,151,000 according to the Soviet census of 1939, making it one of the most populous national republics in the Soviet Union behind Ukraine (with about 30,946,000 people) and Uzbekistan (with a population of about 6,271,000).⁵³ The 1,953,000 Kazakhs counted in this census were easily outnumbered by Russians (at about 1,471,500), Ukrainians (about 521,500), Uzbeks (about 83,500), and Koreans (about 66,800).⁵⁴ The relatively small number of Kazakhs in the republic was a direct result of the famine of 1930-

⁵¹ David M. Glantz and Jonathan M. House, *When Titans Clashed: How the Red Army Stopped Hitler* (Lawrence, 1995), 74-97.

⁵² Thanks to enemy occupation during the first year of the war, the USSR lost 38% of its grain producing farms, 84% of its sugar supplies, 28% of its large-horned livestock, and 60% of its pigs. N. A. Voznesenskii, *Voennaia ekonomika SSSR v period Otechestvennoi voiny* (Moscow, 2003), 110-112.

⁵³ U. A. Poliakov (ed.) *Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naseleniia 1939 goda: osnovnye itogi* (Moscow, 1992), 21.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 75. The 1939 census was full of errors and distortions. However, according to the demographic researcher Mark Tolts, the census actually underestimated the proportion of Kazakhs in the republic because the census makers counted about 375,000 Gulag prisoners (mostly Slavs) in Kazakhstan who actually lived in Russia. The census makers did this deliberately to conceal the catastrophic population losses among Kazakhs during the famine. See Tolts, “Ethnic composition of Kazakhstan on the eve of the Second World War: re-evaluation of the 1939 Soviet census results,” *Central Asian Survey* 25 (1-2): (2006), 143-148.

1933.⁵⁵ Thanks to devastating human losses during these years, the Kazakhs lost their status as a decisive demographic majority in their own national territory.⁵⁶

Kazakhstan's Party and government leaders expected all of these peoples to participate in the "all people's [*vsenarodnaia*] war" declared by Stalin in his radio address of July 3, 1941.⁵⁷ Throughout the war, Party propagandists described Kazakhstan as a major supplier of soldier-reinforcements to the front and as an important source of war materiel, food, coal, and oil.⁵⁸ As ubiquitous as this propagandistic narrative was, it fails to explain how mobilization proceeded on the ground, how the multinational composition of the republic influenced the mobilizational policies of Party and government officials, and how mobilization influenced interactions between these authorities and the republic's soldiers, collective farmers, and industrial workers. This dissertation is one of the first scholarly attempts to answer these questions.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 144.

⁵⁶ According to Tolts' reevaluation of the 1939 census, Kazakhs constituted 40.4% of the population of Kazakhstan and Russians only 38.4%. Ibid, 46.

⁵⁷ Joseph Stalin, "The German Invasion of the Soviet Union," in Stalin, *The Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union* (New York, 1945), 9-17.

⁵⁸ See for example "V respublikanskoi i mestnoi promyshlennosti – voennyi stil' raboty: Rech' sekretaria TsK KP(b) Kazakhstana tov. Skvortsova na soveshchani i sekretarei obkomov KP(b) Kazakhstana po promyshlennosti i zamestitelei predsedatelei ispolkomov oblsoveto v deputatov trudiashchikhsia 14 avgusta 1942 goda," *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*. August 18, 1942, 3-4.

Figure 1: The Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic
During the Great Patriotic War

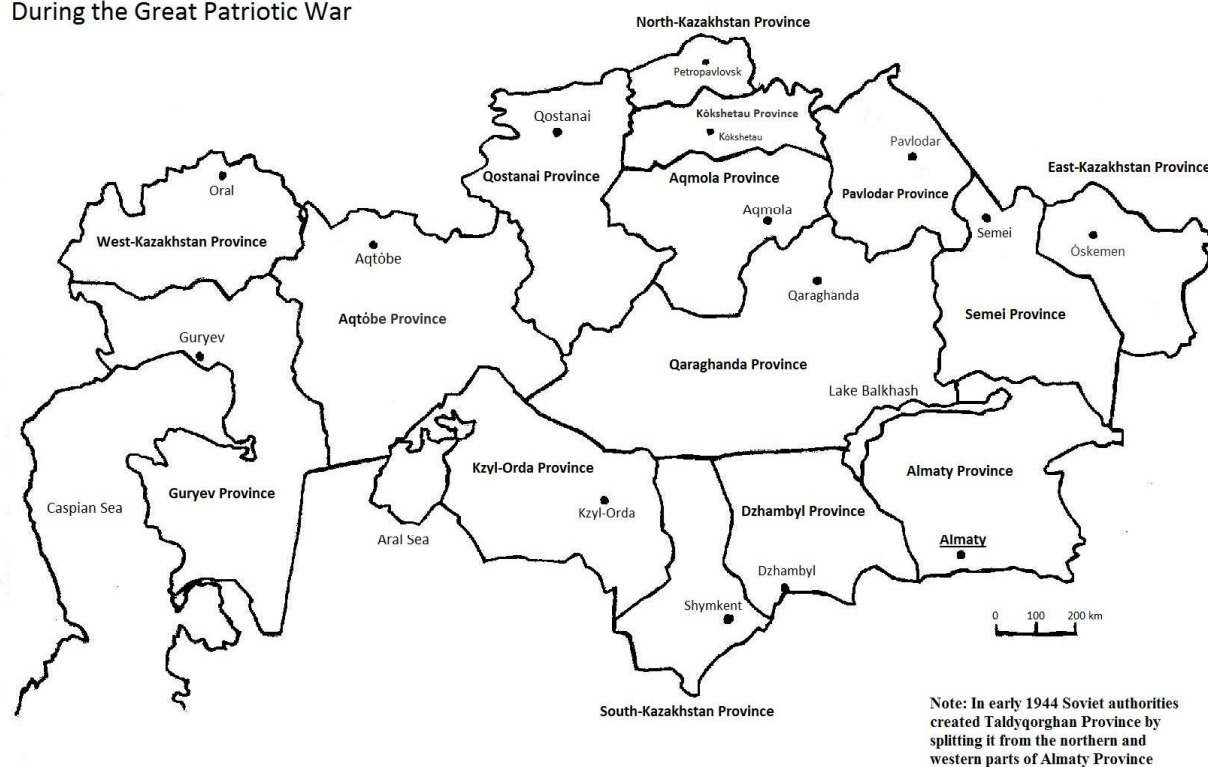


Figure 1: Map modified from “Kazakhskaiia SSR v 1959 godu,”

https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Казахская_Советская_Социалистическая_Республика#/ru.syg. Last accessed April 28, 2015.

Historiographical Contributions

The major English-language monographs about the Great Patriotic War devote little or no attention to Kazakhstan and the other Eastern regions of the Soviet Union.⁵⁹ Historians in contemporary Kazakhstan, in contrast, have published a sizeable corpus of research about their

⁵⁹ See Alexander Werth, *Russia at War, 1941-1945* (New York, 1964); Richard Overy, *Russia's War* (New York: Penguin, 1997); Chris Bellamy, *Absolute War: Soviet Russia in the Second World War* (London, 2007); John Erickson, *The Road to Stalingrad* (London, 1975); Ibid, *The Road to Berlin: Continuing the History of Stalin's War with Germany* (Boulder, 1983).

republic's role in the war. Their books are a testament to the central place of the war in post-Soviet Kazakhstani identity and to the lasting influence of Soviet-era paradigms on contemporary scholarship in the country. The historians who wrote the formative Soviet works on wartime Kazakhstan continue to dominate scholarship on this topic in independent Kazakhstan.⁶⁰ For example, in the official *History of Kazakhstan*, the eminent historian Manash Kozybaev emphasizes that wartime Party and government officials mobilized the republic on the same basis as every other Soviet regions.⁶¹ In a refrain that pervades practically every post-Soviet Kazakhstani work on the Great Patriotic War, Kozybaev asserts that this mobilization campaign succeeded because the republic's multinational population was fundamentally patriotic and loyal to the Soviet system from the beginning of the war to its end.⁶²

In the *History of Kazakhstan*, Kozybaev displays obvious pride in his republic's contribution to the Soviet war effort. This perspective is perfectly understandable. After all, many of Kazakhstan's soldiers and workers performed their duties admirably and under very difficult circumstances during the war, and it would be wrong to minimize or deny their contributions to the Allied victory. At the same time, this patriotic narrative is problematic because it recapitulates many of the ideological prejudices of Soviet historians. L. N. Nursultanova's recent monograph on Kazakhstan during the Great Patriotic War, for example,

⁶⁰ Key Soviet works include Abishev, *Kazakhstan v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine, 1941-1945*; Manash Kozybaev, *Kazakhstan – arsenal fronta* (Alma-Ata, 1970); T. B. Balakaev, *Kolkhoznoe krest'ianstvo Kazakhstana v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny, 1941-1945 gg.* (Alma-Ata, 1971). See also the many books by Pavel Belan about the participation of Kazakhstanis in the major campaigns of the war.

⁶¹ Kozybaev, *Istoriia Kazakhstana*, vol. 4, 449-538.

⁶² For Kozybaev, the growth of Soviet patriotism in Kazakhstan was a result of "socialist construction" during the 1930s and the attendant elimination of unemployment, the "liquidation of illiteracy," and the improvement of the position of women in Kazakh society. Kozybaev contends that the negative consequences of Soviet rule during the 1930s such as famine and terror did not dampen the patriotic enthusiasm of Kazakhstan's population during the war, which was able to "overcome the corrupting influence of Stalinism and unite to defend the Fatherland." Ibid, 449-450.

reproduces this patriotic narrative wholesale.⁶³ To her credit, Nursultanova's book relies less heavily on Soviet-era research than does Kozybaev in the *History of Kazakhstan*, and she is one of the only Kazakhstani historians who has integrated documents from the Presidential Archive (APRK), Kazakhstan's Central State Archive (TsGARK), and other state archives and integrated them into her analysis of the republic's wartime history. For the most part, however, Nursultanova does not analyze these documents critically and takes the conclusions of their Party and government authors at face value. The principle conclusion of her book, that "Without question, the Party and government succeeded in organizing the work of all organizations and institutions [in Kazakhstan] to supply the front with all that was needed to achieve victory,"⁶⁴ is virtually identical to the conclusions of most Soviet-era monographs.

It is important to keep in mind that the goal of Kozybaev and Nursultanova's books is not solely to increase scholarly knowledge about the history of their republic during the Great Patriotic War. Like Kazakhstani historians writing during the Soviet period, most historians in independent Kazakhstan have designed their books to instill a strong sense of patriotism. Halfway between scholarship and propaganda, these works fail to problematize several key issues connected to wartime mobilization in Kazakhstan. Because Kozybaev and Nursultanova assume that Kazakhstan was a fully constituted Soviet republic by the late 1930s, they do not explore the possibility that the war itself altered the republic's relationship with key Soviet institutions such as the Communist Party, the Red Army, and Moscow-based economic commissariats. This dissertation explores this possibility in detail, arguing that although the large-scale social and political changes of the 1930s are crucial for understanding mobilization

⁶³ L. N. Nursultanova, *Kazakhstan v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny (1941-1945 gg.)* (Almaty, 2011).

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 128.

during the war, the period from 1941 to 1945 constitutes a discreet period in Kazakhstan's history.

Another weakness undermining recent works about wartime Kazakhstan is that they uncritically adopt the official Soviet claim that the Communist Party and government pursued the same mobilizational strategies towards every national group inside the republic.⁶⁵ This ideal of national equality existed only in the realm of propaganda – Soviet mobilizational policies towards different population groups were highly differentiated. In his influential book about Ukraine and the Soviet Union during the Great Patriotic War, the historian Amir Weiner argues that Soviet leaders determined which groups were part of the Soviet community of nations and which were not by assessing their contribution to the war effort.⁶⁶ Stalin and other Soviet leaders treated groups that, in their estimation, fought loyally for the Soviet cause (like the Russians) as ideal Soviet nationalities. At the same time, Party and government leaders excluded from Soviet society those nationalities that they considered guilty of collective collaboration (like the Soviet Germans) or cowardice (like the Jews). In the case of the Soviet Germans, the main instrument of exclusion was deportation to the Soviet interior.⁶⁷ The most common strategy for excluding Jews was demonizing them with anti-Semitic propaganda and dismissing them from positions of authority in the Party and government apparatuses.⁶⁸ In Weiner's estimation, these exclusionary

⁶⁵ Almost none of the books about the war published in Kazakhstan mention the many national groups deported to the republic from 1941 to 1945. The recent *History of Kazakhstan* devotes some attention to Germans mobilized into the Labor Army, but it does not explore how Party and government officials in the republic treated these Germans or other deported groups. Kozybaev, *Istoriia Kazakhstana*, vol. 4, 526-531.

⁶⁶ Amir Wiener, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton, 2001).

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 129-190.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 191-235.

campaigns signaled an intensification of the “Bolshevik purification drive,” a drive that increasingly focused on excising national rather than class enemies as the war ground on.⁶⁹ For Weiner, this purification drive was the culmination of a profound epistemological shift in Soviet ideology – a transition away from a faith in the “malleability of human nature” to the belief that “enemy” national groups were irredeemable and had to be permanently excluded from Soviet society.⁷⁰

This dissertation contends that Communist Party and government authorities also waged a campaign of purification inside wartime Kazakhstan that became similarly “ethnicized” from 1941 to 1945. The dynamics of exclusion in Kazakhstan, however, evinced notable dissimilarities from Ukraine – Weiner’s principal geographic reference point for understanding the wartime Soviet Union. Ukraine was also a multinational republic with a demographic split between Russians and the titular nationality, but during the war Ukraine became more nationally homogenous because the NKVD deported Soviet Germans and Poles from the republic and the Nazis murdered most of Ukraine’s Jews - the largest national minority in the region before the war.⁷¹ In contrast to the demographic situation in Ukraine, several deported national groups

⁶⁹ Ibid, 21-22.

⁷⁰ Weiner, “Nature, Nurture, and Memory in a Socialist Utopia: Delineating the Soviet Socio-Ethnic Body in the Age of Socialism,” *The American Historical Review*, vol. 104 (4): (1999), 1114-1155; *ibid*, *Making Sense of War*, 149-154; Weiner (ed.), *Landscaping the Human Garden: Twentieth-Century Population Management in a Comparative Framework* (Stanford, 2003), 1-18.

⁷¹ According to the 1939 census, the demographic share of Ukraine’s titular nationality was substantially higher than in Kazakhstan. According to this census, over 76% of Ukraine’s population of approximately 30,950,000 was Ukrainian and a mere 13.5% was Russian. Poliakov, *Vsesoiuznaia perepis’ naseleniia 1939 goda*, 68. The deportation of Germans and Poles from Ukraine during the war was the culmination of a process of ethnic cleansing initiated by the NKVD during the late 1930s. Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, 138-147. The 1939 census indicated that there were about 1,533,000 Jews in Ukraine – 4.9% of the republic’s population. Poliakov, *Vsesoiuznaia perepis’ naseleniia 1939 goda*, 68. The Nazis and their allies murdered most of these Jews, minus the small number who escaped east before the arrival of Wehrmacht. Wendy Lower, *Nazi Empire-Building and the Holocaust in Ukraine* (Chapel Hill, 2005), 129-161.

arrived in Kazakhstan during the war along with over 500,000 evacuees from the Soviet Union's Western regions.⁷² Another critical difference between the two republics was that a fierce anti-Soviet nationalist insurgency consumed western Ukraine throughout much of the war,⁷³ but no mass guerilla movement materialized in Kazakhstan.

Because of these different wartime experiences, different national hierarchies emerged inside Kazakhstan and Ukraine during the war. The centrally promulgated nationality policies of the Soviet Communist Party and government, however, significantly shaped the contours of national hierarchies in both republics, leading to strong commonalities between them. One of these similarities was the leading place of the Russians. In his recent monograph, which is based on extensive archival research in Moscow, the Russian historian Fedor Sinitsyn argues that Stalin and the rest of the Soviet leadership “restructured” their nationality policies during the war to more effectively mobilize the Soviet population.⁷⁴ Sinitsyn maintains that after the Nazi invasion, these leaders turned away from “proletarian internationalism” as the lynchpin of their ideology and instead promoted Russian nationalism among all Soviet peoples, a shift he refers to as a reliance on “the Russian national factor.”⁷⁵ In Sinitsyn's estimation, this turn towards Russian nationalism was a utilitarian measure necessitated by the strategic situation on the frontlines. As the military situation became more and more precarious during the Battle of

⁷² According to the Kazakh government, 532,506 evacuees arrived in the republic from August 1941 to January 1943. “Iz spravki otdela po khozustrouistvu evakonaseleniia SNK Kazakhskoi SSR o prieme i trudoustrouistve evakuirovannogo v respubliku naseleniia za 1941-1943 gg.” August 13, 1943. TsGARK f. 1137 (SNK Kazakh SSR) o. 8, d. 384, l. 13-29, in S. N. Pokrovskii (ed.), *Kazakhstan v period Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny Sovetskogo souza: sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (Alma-Ata, 1964) vol. 1, 433-435.

⁷³ Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, 239-297.

⁷⁴ Fedor Sinitsyn, *Za russkii narod! Natsional'nyi vopros v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine* (Moscow, 2010).

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 12.

Moscow in the fall of 1941, Party propagandists focused more intently on Russian nationalism as the centerpiece of their agitprop efforts.⁷⁶ In subsequent months and years, however, large numbers of non-Russians joined the ranks of the Red Army, and the Communist Party correspondingly deemphasized Russian nationalism as the ideological glue that held Soviet society together. Sinitsyn argues that during the concluding phase of the war (January 1944 to May 1945), Soviet leaders focused on promoting the idea of a single Soviet Motherland that embraced most of the Soviet peoples.⁷⁷

Sinitsyn's book convincingly demonstrates that ethnic concerns pervaded the thinking of Soviet leaders during the war. He also shows that during this period, these leaders formulated their nationality policies at least partially in response to the constantly changing situation on the frontlines. Adopting this perspective and extending it to Kazakhstan, this dissertation argues that the successes and failures of the Red Army and the general progress of the Soviet war effort helped shaped the contours and content of Communist Party and government policies towards the republic's different national groups. During the war, Soviet authorities implemented four mobilizational policies connected to the national question in Kazakhstan. First, these officials placed Russian nationalism at the center of their propaganda efforts and disseminated this message to all the republic's national groups, including the Kazakhs. Second, Party and government authorities accelerated the integration of Central Asians into the military and labor force through conscription and propaganda. Third, these officials integrated the deported nationalities into the republic's economy as forced laborers. Finally, these officials promoted a

⁷⁶ Ibid, 12-16.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 343-344. Sinitsyn's argument complements the findings of the historian David Brandenberger, who argues that the Communist Party began promoting Russian nationalism during the late 1930s to make its propaganda more understandable to the Russian people. See David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931-1956* (Cambridge MA, 2002).

broad Soviet patriotism in Kazakhstan that incorporated some nationalities while excluding others.

The unique bureaucratic culture of the Stalinist Soviet Union also informed the objectives and methods of mobilization in the republic. Several historians have argued that Soviet governance under Stalin was totalitarian in aspiration but rarely in practice.⁷⁸ In order to wage his socialist offensive, Stalin attempted to create a highly disciplined administrative apparatus that would seamlessly carry out the will of the Party leadership in every corner of the Soviet Union. During the 1930s, however, reality on the ground was quite different from this idealized vision. Constant material scarcities, a dearth of trained personnel, and Moscow's habit of issuing directives without taking local conditions into account forced regional officials in practically every Party and government organization to ignore and modify central directives to avoid official censure and arrest. The Stalinist administrative system was more dictatorial and centralized than other contemporary states,⁷⁹ but ironically, extreme centralization led to the proliferation of so many disconnects and misunderstandings between center and locality that the implementation of central directives often became a haphazard affair dependent on the agenda of local officials.

This dissertation also contends, by using Kazakhstan as a case study, that wartime mobilization increased the scope and severity of these administrative disconnects. These disconnects proliferated in large part thanks to dramatically increased administrative demands on the republic's local officials from 1941 to 1945. Not only did the Soviet leadership order these officials to mobilize hundreds of thousands of men and women for frontline service while

⁷⁸ See in particular Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the USSR*; Gábor Tamás Rittersporn, *Stalinist Simplifications and Soviet Complications: Social Tensions and Political Conflicts in the USSR, 1933-1953* (Chur, 1991); Peter H. Solomon Jr., *Soviet Criminal Justice under Stalin* (Cambridge UK, 1996); O. V. Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag: From Collectivization to the Great Terror* (New Haven, 2004), 186-235.

⁷⁹ Shearer, *Policing Stalin's Socialism*, 1-4.

overseeing the vast expansion of economic production, Moscow also directed these local officials to intensify propaganda work and tend to the needs of large deportee and evacuee populations. The leaders of the Kazakh Communist Party and Kazakh government struggled to fulfill these tasks to the satisfaction of Soviet leaders. Because even high-ranking officials in the Soviet Union's republics had a very limited ability to appeal Moscow's directives, Kazakhstan's Party and government leaders had little choice but to blame provincial officials for administrative breakdowns and mobilization-related failures. These provincial Party and government officials faced similar institutional and material constraints that made it difficult for them to implement mobilization, and when faced with criticism from the Kazakh leadership, they usually allocated blame further down the chain of command to district officials. During the war, scapegoating became an even more integral component of Kazakhstan's administrative culture than it had been during the 1930s, and in the end, this phenomenon facilitated the imposition of Moscow's control since central officials needed to institute a semblance of order to accomplish their mobilizational objectives.

Primary Source Base and Chapter Descriptions

The primary corpus of sources used in this dissertation is the documentary collection of the Central Committee of the Kazakh Communist Party, which is located in Kazakhstan's Presidential Archive in Almaty. Because the Kazakh Communist Party was involved in every aspect of wartime mobilization, these documents provide an excellent window onto military conscription, labor mobilization, and propaganda efforts in the republic. The dissertation also makes extensive use of government archives in Kazakhstan, especially the republic's Central State Archive, which contains the files of many Kazakh economic commissariats involved in

labor mobilization. Because the leaders of the Soviet Communist Party regularly issued directives to the Kazakh Communist Party in order to coordinate the mobilizational effort in the republic, this dissertation incorporates a large assortment of documents produced by the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party. Information about deportees in wartime Kazakhstan is difficult to access in Almaty and Moscow. For this reason, Chapters Five and Six are based largely on the archival holdings of the George and Abby O'Neill Archives of the Communist Party of the Soviet State in Harvard University, which contain complete runs of NKVD documentary collections from the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF).

Because Propaganda was a critical component of the Communist Party's mobilizational effort in Kazakhstan, Chapters Two and Four analyze propaganda among Kazakh soldiers and Kazakh workers, respectively. Chapter Two focuses on frontline newspapers published in Kazakh, as well as the many leaflets and brochures produced by the Political Section of the Red Army (PURKKA). Chapter Four zeroes in on the major republican newspapers published during the war – *Kazakhstanskaia pravda* and *Sotsiaslistik Qazaqstan*, as well as widely disseminated propaganda materials such as reproductions of the records of Party and government meetings. These primary sources allow for a comprehensive analysis of shifting ideological trends in wartime Kazakhstan, as well as an assessment of what was unique about the agitprop campaign in the republic compared to other Soviet regions.

This dissertation also utilizes several document collections produced by Kazakhstani and Russian publishers within the last twenty-five years. These high-quality volumes contain dozens and often hundreds of archival documents pertaining to mobilization in Kazakhstan. The originals of many of these documents, such as those produced by the Soviet Commissariat of Defense (NKO), are almost entirely inaccessible to foreign researchers, so these collections

offered an excellent opportunity to incorporate rare materials that shed light on wartime mobilization. Finally, this dissertation analyzes many published and online memoirs written by Red Army soldiers and deportees. To avoid reproducing the ideological perspectives of Soviet censors, this dissertation focuses on memoirs written during the post-1991 period. These memoirs help compensate for the bureaucratic language that permeates official documents, which is especially important because reports written by Party and government officials often described Soviet citizens as abstract population categories rather than people with personalities, hopes, and desires. Analysis of memoir literature allows for a more humane treatment of the mobilizational experience that incorporates the day-to-day experiences of soldiers and deportees.

A Note on Kazakhstan's Administrative Structure during World War II

During the Great Patriotic War, the leading organs of the Soviet Party-state had substantial authority over the operations of Party and government institutions in Union republics such as Kazakhstan. The GKO stood at the apex of this administrative chain of command. The Soviet Communist Party and Sovnarkom created the GKO on June 30, 1941 to coordinate the Soviet Union's gargantuan administrative, economic, and military machine to prosecute the war effort. Stalin chaired the GKO and its other members were Viacheslav Molotov, Kliment Voroshilov, Georgii Malenkov, Lavrentii Beria, Nikolai Voznesenskii, and Lazar Kaganovich. In November 1944, Voroshilov lost his position in the GKO and Nikolai Bulganin replaced him.⁸⁰ In practice, the GKO depended a great deal on the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party and the Soviet Sovnarkom to formulate and implement policy. The Soviet

⁸⁰ "Postanovlenie Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR, Soveta Narodnykh Komissarov SSSR i Tsentral'nogo Komiteta VKP(b) ob obrazovanii Gosudarstvennogo Komiteta Oborony," June 20, 1941. In S. V. Stepashin et al, *Organy gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti SSSR v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine: sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow, 2000), vol. 2 (1), 126-127.

Sovnarkom controlled a large number of specialized people's commissariats such as the NKO and NKVD that functioned similarly to government ministries in parliamentary systems. During the war, Stalin chaired both the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party and the Soviet Sovnarkom, making him the single most powerful official within the Party-state apparatuses of the Soviet Union.

Kazakhstan's Party and government structures replicated most of the essential features of the all-Union administrative apparatuses. The most authoritative body in the republic was the Central Committee of the Kazakh Communist Party, which regularly issued important directives concerning conscription, labor mobilization, and the administration of deportees. Each province, district, and city in Kazakhstan had its own Party committee that implemented the resolutions of the Kazakh Party Central Committee. These regional Party committees directed primary Party organizations in factories and on collective farms as well as in most administrative and educational institutions.⁸¹ Like the Soviet Sovnarkom, the Kazakh Sovnarkom directed an impressive array of government commissariats. These Kazakh commissariats often had the same functional jurisdictions as Soviet commissariats (such as agriculture, education, and internal affairs), but their area of operations was limited to Kazakhstan. The basic government organ in wartime Kazakhstan was the soviet of workers' deputies. These government soviets functioned at the provincial, district, and city level and oversaw day-to-day administrative matters such as supplying food and basic supplies to the local population.

⁸¹ At the beginning of 1941, the Kazakh Communist Party network consisted of 14 provincial committees, 16 city committees, 195 district committees, and over 6,000 primary Party organizations operating in factories, transportation centers, collective farms, state farms, machine tractor stations (MTSs), government buildings, and educational institutions. Abishev, *Kazakhstan v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine*, 8.

Chapter Descriptions

This dissertation begins by analyzing the most vivid example of mobilization in wartime Kazakhstan – the conscription of the Kazakhs for frontline service. Chapter One argues that Soviet leaders mobilized the Kazakhs for frontline service on a mass basis, but they did so in a way that demonstrated an enormous amount of distrust towards them and other Central Asians. The chapter maintains that this distrust was not a product of official racism against Central Asians, but instead stemmed from an assumption on the part of Soviet leaders that non-Slavic groups had not achieved the level of cultural and social development necessary to serve as effective Red Army soldiers. This does not mean, however, that Soviet authorities were indifferent to the fate of Kazakh soldiers or that they did not attempt to integrate them into Soviet society. Chapter Two argues that the Soviet Communist Party waged a large-scale propaganda campaign designed to transform these Kazakhs into Soviet patriots. As the war progressed, frontline propagandists jettisoned agitprop themes derived from the national history of the Kazakhs in favor of promoting an unambiguously Russian and Soviet assortment of military heroes. This narrative shift marked an important moment of transition when the Communist Party accelerated its efforts to Sovietize Kazakh national identity.

Service on the frontlines enormously influenced the identities of Kazakh soldiers, but this service was only one aspect of Kazakhstan's mobilizational experience. Chapter Three transports the reader from the battlefields of the Great Patriotic War to the republic's factories and collective farms. Analyzing the mobilization of the republic's workers and collective farmers for labor, the chapter argues that labor mobilization accelerated the integration of Kazakhstan's economy into the all-Union economy while simultaneously catalyzing the subordination of the republic's workforce to all-Union government bodies. Kazakh Communist

Party and government officials developed a number of strategies to resist this loss of control over local workers, but as the war continued, these strategies became less and less effective because they threatened to undermine the Soviet leadership's plan to reconstruct the recently liberated Western borderlands. As a result, Kazakhstan's officials became powerless to maintain control over skilled workers and prevent the economic peripheralization of their republic.

Throughout the war, Kazakhstan's local officials struggled to satisfy Moscow's demands for food and manufactured items, in large part because the republic's workers and farmers were working even harder than they had during the 1930s and their living and working conditions gradually deteriorated from 1941 to 1945. Chapter Four argues that the Kazakh Communist Party attempted to use propaganda as a cure-all to solve the manifold problems undermining the labor mobilization campaign. Thanks to shortages of propaganda materials and personnel, however, it proved difficult for the Party to wage this propaganda campaign on the ground, especially among the republic's Kazakh population. Nevertheless, the war gave the Kazakh Communist Party a unique opportunity to expand the worldview of Kazakhs by linking their labor efforts and identities to geographically distant Soviet peoples. In this way, the wartime propaganda campaign inside Kazakhstan contributed to the Sovietization of Kazakh identity.

The Kazakhs were not the only group in the republic who experienced mobilization for wartime labor. Chapter Five shifts the narrative focus from labor mobilization among Kazakhs to the labor exploitation of the Soviet Germans and North Caucasians deported to Kazakhstan by the NKVD. Analyzing life in the so-called special-settlements, the chapter argues that deportation created a political and social interstitial space inside the republic, and the interstitial position of the deportees left them particularly vulnerable to labor exploitation by Party and government officials. Surveillance and repression were central aspects of life in the special-

settlements, just as they were in every region in wartime Kazakhstan. Chapter Six argues that NKVD officers used surveillance and repression to affix the republic's national groups into a hierarchy of loyalty. The purpose of this hierarchy was twofold. First, it allowed the NKVD to identify and repress "anti-Soviet" elements among the republic's Slavic and Kazakh populations and second, this hierarchy facilitated the NKVD effort to transform the deportees into objects of labor by categorizing them as hopelessly anti-Soviet. As this dissertation will demonstrate, Party and government officials mobilized every national group in Kazakhstan for total war against Nazi Germany. Specific strategies of mobilization, however, varied widely depending on the national group in question. NKO policies towards Kazakh and other non-Slavic soldiers vividly demonstrate the differentiated nature of these mobilizational strategies, and these policies are the subject of Chapter One.

Chapter 1 – All to the Front? Nationality and Military Mobilization in Kazakhstan

The mobilization of the Kazakhs for the war against Nazi Germany was a revolutionary development in the history of the steppe region. From December 1941 to May 1945, the Soviet Commissariat of Defense (NKO) mobilized approximately one million Kazakhs for service in the Red Army, out of a total Kazakh population of no more than 2.3 million.¹ For the first time in history, a substantial proportion of the Kazakh population left the steppe to fight in a modern army on European battlefields. From December 1941 to the winter of 1943, these Kazakh soldiers reinforced a Red Army that was reeling from devastating defeats inflicted by the Nazi invaders.² Once the Red Army began blunting and reversing these offensives in 1943-1944, Kazakh troops contributed their strength and often their lives to the destruction of the Wehrmacht at Stalingrad, Kursk, Berlin, and other major battles. According to one scholarly estimate, at least 125,500 of these Kazakhs died fighting in these titanic engagements.³

Service on the frontlines changed the lives of an entire generation of Kazakhs. Like Russian frontline troops, these Kazakhs experienced the trauma of intensive combat, invariably leaving deep scars on their psyches.⁴ The frontline experience involved much more than trauma,

¹ Kazakhs were the fifth most represented national group in the wartime Red Army after Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians and Uzbeks. David Glantz, *Colossus Reborn: The Red Army at War, 1941-1943* (Lawrence, 2005), 604.

² For a particularly interesting analysis of the great encirclements of Red Army units by the Wehrmacht during the opening months of Operation Barbarossa, see Roger R. Reese, *Why Stalin's Soldiers Fought: The Red Army's Military Effectiveness in World War II* (Lawrence, 2011), 57-81.

³ Glantz, *Colossus Reborn*, 604.

⁴ It is difficult to ascertain how wartime trauma affected Soviet soldiers because Soviet authorities did not recognize the existence of mental disorders among veterans during and after the war. Consequently, the concept of trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder does not appear in either wartime documents or the recollections of frontline veterans. See Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War: Life and Death in the Red Army, 1939-1945* (New York, 2006), 268-269.

however. Recalling his wartime service, the Kazakh veteran Amanzhol Kalikov, a former resident of an *aul* in Aqmola Province, writes that his “outlook” [*krugozor*] expanded considerably thanks to his time on the frontlines.⁵ During the terrible years of the Great Patriotic War, the young Kalikov learned Russian, defended venerable Russian cities like Moscow, and became friends with soldiers of many nationalities. For Kalikov and many other Kazakh soldiers, the front became a space for integration into the broader Soviet community.

Western historians have devoted very little attention to the experiences of Kazakh and other non-Slavic soldiers in the wartime Red Army.⁶ Indeed, the military historian Roger Reese is one of the few Western scholars who has explored this topic in significant detail. In his most recent monograph, Reese assesses the efforts of Party and government officials to integrate non-Slavs into the Red Army and concludes that they mostly failed in this endeavor.⁷ Reese supports this argument by citing low rates of voluntary military induction in the North Caucasus, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and other non-Russian regions, as well as high rates of desertion among non-Slavic soldiers. In contrast to Reese’s negative assessment, post-Soviet scholars in Kazakhstan have uniformly claimed that there were no real obstacles to the mobilization of Kazakhs and other non-Slavs for service in the Red Army.⁸ These authors unequivocally emphasize the heroism of Kazakh soldiers on the frontlines and maintain that their experiences were essentially the same as those of Russian soldiers.

⁵ L. U. Girsh and L. B. Manannikova, *Skvoz’ plamia voiny* (Almaty, 2005), 89-90.

⁶ Catherine Merridale’s *Ivan’s War* is one of the few treatments of the wartime Red Army soldier by a Western historian, and it devotes almost no attention to the experiences of non-Slavic troops.

⁷ Reese, *Why Stalin’s Soldiers Fought*, 141-148; 248-252.

⁸ See in particular P. S. Belan, *Na vsekh frontakh: Kazakhstantsy v srazheniiakh Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny, 1941-1945 gg.* (Almaty, 1995); Kozybaev, *Istoriia Kazakhstana*, 465-511; V. K. Grigor’ev and L. S. Akhmetova, *Iarostnyi 1941: razmyshleniia istorikov* (Almaty, 2011), 239-277; Nursultanova, *Kazakhstan v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny*, 105-127.

This chapter challenges the historiographical extremes represented by Reese and these Kazakhstani historians. I argue that the leaders of the NKO on the one hand and officials inside the Soviet and Kazakh Communist Parties on the other genuinely attempted to induct Kazakhs and other non-Slavs into the Red Army on a mass basis. NKO conscription policies towards Central Asians and Caucasians, however, constantly changed in response to secret orders from Moscow and the strategic situation on the frontlines. Thanks to the discriminatory practices of the NKO and Red Army officers, the idea of national equality within the ranks so often trumpeted by Communist Party propagandists proved to be untrue in practice. Short-term strategic exigencies had a greater influence on conscription policies in Kazakhstan and policies towards non-Slavic frontline soldiers than did long-term ideological goals. Conscription into the army was a channel for the integration of the Kazakhs into the broader Soviet community, but frontline service magnified rather than levelled existing inequalities between Slavs and non-Slavs in Kazakhstan and the Soviet Union as a whole.

Military Service and Conscription on the Kazakh Steppe before the Great Patriotic War

The idea of Kazakhs serving in the military was a subject of intense debate among imperial officials and members of the Kazakh intelligentsia in the decades before the 1917 Revolutions. These debates cut to the heart of a question that was central for Russian administrators and Kazakh intellectuals alike - what was the place of the Kazakh nomads in the Russian Empire? In 1822, imperial administrators declared the indigenous residents of the Kazakh steppe to be “aliens” exempt from military service.⁹ It is true that in the early 19th

⁹ The term *inorodtsy* originally had a concrete legal definition referring to non-Orthodox peoples “not subject to the general laws of the empire, who preserved their local customs and traditional leadership and enjoyed certain other privileges.” By the beginning of the 20th century, imperial officials were using the word to describe non-Russian

century, individual Kazakhs began graduating from government-administered military colleges to join the imperial army as officers, but their numbers were small and their overall influence on the Kazakh nomads was minor.¹⁰

During the 1905 Revolution, military service became a particularly pressing issue for the secular leaders of the Kazakh intelligentsia. In their newspapers, these intellectuals demanded that imperial officials stop treating the Kazakhs as an “alien” people and begin providing them with the same legal and political rights as the empire’s Orthodox and Russian-speaking subjects.¹¹ From 1914 to 1916, key members of the Kazakh intelligentsia such as Älikhan Bökeikhan and Akhmet Baitürsynūly continued to articulate a close connection between military service, Kazakh nationhood, and membership in the Russian imperial community. These writers asserted that military service on the battlefields of World War I would demonstrate the loyalty of the Kazakhs to Russia and convince imperial officials to treat them as full-fledged citizens of a liberalized empire.¹² The vast majority of Kazakhs, however, had no interest in fighting in faraway Europe, and imperial officials continued to assume that they were untrustworthy. Instead of inducting the Kazakh nomads into combat units, in 1916 military officials attempted to conscript them into construction battalions for work behind the frontlines. The Kazakh population responded to this conscription decree by launching a massive rebellion.¹³ This

speakers whom they considered culturally backward. See John W. Slocum, “Who, and When, Were the *Inorodtsy*? The Evolution of the Category of ‘Aliens’ in Imperial Russia,” *Russian Review*, vol. 57 (2): (1998), 173-190.

¹⁰ The explicit purpose of these military colleges was to train the sons of sultans and other Kazakh elites to work as administrators for the Russian colonial administrations. See Gulmira Sultangalieva, “Kazakhskoe chinovnichestvo Orenburgskogo vedomstva: formirovanie i napravlenie deiatel’nosti (XIX),” *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, vol. 27: (2009), 84-86.

¹¹ Rottier, “Creating the Kazak Nation,” 111-215.

¹² *Ibid*, 260-267.

¹³ Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, 118-126.

uprising spread across Central Asia and became part of the Russian Civil War after the October Revolution led to the disintegration of Russian control in the region.¹⁴

In stark contrast to tsarist officials, Bolshevik leaders in Moscow actively encouraged the Kazakhs to fight for them during the Russian Civil War. In August 1918, the Commissariat of Nationalities ordered the formation of volunteer Kazakh national units to participate in the campaign against the White general Kolchak.¹⁵ A short time later, the Military Revolutionary Soviet oversaw the integration of several Alash Orda units into the Red Army.¹⁶ According to one post-Soviet work about the establishment of Bolshevik authority in Central Asia during the Civil War, the Red Army inducted as many as 31,113 Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Turkmen, Kyrgyz and other Central Asian soldiers into its ranks by October 1920.¹⁷

The integration of Central Asians into the Red Army during the early 1920s did not proceed altogether smoothly, however. Red Army officers on the Kazakh steppe and the rest of Central Asia often responded to Moscow's directives with ambivalence and even outright resistance, and they often refused to allow members of indigenous ethnicities to volunteer for military service. These officers often framed their resistance to central conscription policies by using language remarkably similar to the bigoted discourse employed by the tsarist officials they

¹⁴ See Sokol, *The Revolt of 1916 in Russian Central Asia*.

¹⁵ M. K. Kozybaev, et al. *Istoricheskii opyt zashchity Otechesva: Voennaia istoriia Kazakhstana* (Almaty, 1999), 198-208; K. Amanzholov, *Zhauyngerlik tuyi astynda: qyzyl Armiianyng Qazaqstanda qurylghan askeri bolimderi men quramalarynyng erlikpen otken zholdary: 1918-1945 zh. zh.* (Almaty, 1991), 31-69. Until the fall of 1918, Alash Orda units actively fought against the Bolsheviks in concert with the Whites. The Kazakh nationalist leaders decided to ally with the Bolsheviks after the Red Army made significant military gains on the steppe and after Kolchak attempted to abolish the autonomy of the Alash Orda. See Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, 137-156.

¹⁶ K. Amanzholov, *Zhauyngerlik tuyi astynda*, 31-69.

¹⁷ A. Zakramov et al. *Turkkomissii VTsIK i TsK RKP(b) i ukreplenie Sovetskoi vlasti v Srednei Azii* (Tashkent, 1991), 213.

replaced, citing for example the “backward” and “cowardly” nature of the steppe nomads.¹⁸ Still, there was a fundamental difference between the conscription policies of tsarist and Bolshevik officials. There is little evidence that imperial officials in St. Petersburg and Central Asia ever sought to mobilize Central Asians for military service on the same basis as Russians. During the 1920s, in contrast, Communist Party and military leaders expressed genuine interest in integrating Central Asians into the Red Army. This integration, however, was to proceed on a voluntary basis only. According to Bolshevik officials, Central Asians were not culturally “developed” enough to serve in the Red Army on a mass basis. For these Party officials and military officers, the appropriate level of “development” entailed not only the ability to read and understand military orders, but also the ability to understand Marxist-Leninist theory and the “true” nature of the “proletarian democratic dictatorship”.¹⁹ During most of the 1920s, Red Army leaders asserted that most Central Asians had yet to reach this level of development, but on paper they remained optimistic that under the tutelage of the Communist Party and Soviet government, the Central Asian peoples would one day be ready for service in the Red Army on the same basis as Slavs.²⁰

This goal came closer to fruition during the late 1920s and 1930s. During this period, Communist Party propagandists increasingly described the Red Army as the multinational defender of the proletarian dictatorship and as a body that included all major Soviet peoples, including Central Asians. In his 1928 speech before the Plenum of the Moscow Soviet in honor of the tenth anniversary of the founding of the Red Army, Stalin described national diversity and

¹⁸ Joshua A. Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation: Military Conscription, Total War, and Mass Politics, 1905-1925* (DeKalb, 2003), 63-95.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

an “internationalist” spirit as key factors distinguishing the Red Army from the defunct tsarist army and the militaries of the “bourgeois” capitalist powers. For Stalin, the multinational structure of the Red Army was one of the principle factors that made it truly socialist.²¹ Adhering to Stalin’s directives to form a multinational army loyal to the Soviet motherland, in 1928 military officials in Kazakhstan began conscripting Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Uyghurs, and other Central Asians alongside the republic’s Slavic citizens.²² Now all Soviet citizens in Kazakhstan, Slavic and Central Asian alike, would be responsible for defending the Soviet Motherland.²³

The 1928 decision to conscript Kazakhs and other Central Asians suggests that Party and military leaders had decided that these national groups were now sufficiently “developed” to serve in the army on a mass basis. It is also likely that with the launching of Stalin’s socialist offensive in 1928, these officials saw military service as a useful medium for disseminating Soviet values such as literacy and loyalty to the Communist Party among Central Asia’s indigenous populations.²⁴ The collectivization of the Kazakh countryside in the early 1930s almost certainly facilitated conscription by making formally itinerant communities more accessible to Red Army officials. Soviet officials probably hoped that conscription would facilitate the Sovietization of the Kazakhs, but it is also likely that conscription tore open fissures

²¹ I. Stalin, *O trekh osobennostiakh Krasnoi armii: rech’ na torzhestvennom plenumе Moskovskogo soveta, posviashchenom desiatoi godovshchine Krasnoi armii* (Moscow, 1938).

²² Belan, “*Na vsekh frontakh*”, 17-18.

²³ There is evidence that the 1928 conscription campaign in Kazakhstan was not altogether successful. It was common, for example, for Kazakh families to hide their sons so that Soviet officials would not conscript them. See Pianciola, “The Collectivization of Agriculture and the Kazakh Herdsmen,” 152-153.

²⁴ Reese convincingly argues that Party and government officials during the 1930s sought to “Sovietize” the predominately peasant Red Army by spreading literacy, conducting anti-religious propaganda, and inculcating loyalty to the Soviet system. See Reese, *Stalin’s Reluctant Soldiers: A Social History of the Red Army, 1925-1941* (Lawrence, 1996).

in Kazakh society by pitting Kazakh conscripts against the many rebellions that erupted in response to collectivization.²⁵

In September 1939, the Soviet government issued a revised version of the Law on Universal Military Obligation. The law reiterated that every Soviet citizen was required to serve in the military regardless of their class and nationality except for members of diaspora nationalities such as Germans or Koreans and individuals imprisoned in corrective-labor camps and colonies.²⁶ The goals of this decree were to increase the number of soldiers in uniform in connection with the heightened threat of war against Germany and Japan while reemphasizing that all non-repressed Soviet citizens were responsible for the defense of the Soviet Union.²⁷ The promulgation of the decree led to the induction of an unprecedented number of Kazakhs and other Central Asians into the military.²⁸ According to a report compiled by the Military Section of the Kazakh Communist Party summarizing the results of conscription in 1939 and 1940 for the Party's Central Committee, 18,276 Kazakhs entered the Red Army as rank-and-file soldiers in 1939, and 16,262 Kazakhs donned the uniform as enlisted personnel in 1940.²⁹ This was a significant increase compared to 1938, when Red Army authorities conscripted only 8,240

²⁵ There were at least 380 uprisings in Kazakhstan in 1929-1931 alone with as many as 80,000 participants. Kozybaev, *Istoricheskii opyt zashchity rodiny*, 222. Some of these rebel bands were highly organized with complex chains of command and the ability to construct fortifications. See Robert Kindler, "Vyzhivanie kak sotsial'nyi konflikt – naselenie Kazakhstana vo vremia goloda 1932/33 gg." in B. Gh. Aiaghan (ed.) "*Qazaqstandaghy agharshylyq: Khalyq qasireti zhane tarikh taghylymdy*": *Khalyqaralyq ghylymi konferentsiia materialdarynyng zhinaghy* (Astana, 2012), 174-175.

²⁶ Reese, *Why Stalin's Soldiers Fought*, 267.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Kozybaev, *Istoricheskii opyt zashchity rodiny*, 214.

²⁹ "Itogi: Ocherednykh pryzvov po Kazakhskoi SSR za poslednie 5 let (1938-1943)," APRK (Archive of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan) f. 708 (Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan), o. 5/1, d. 1127, l. 135.

Kazakhs.³⁰ On the eve of the German invasion of the Soviet Union, Slavs were still overrepresented in the Red Army compared to their overall share in the Soviet population.³¹ As the 1930s progressed, however, Party and military authorities demonstrated an increasing commitment to creating an army that included large numbers of Kazakhs and other Central Asians. This multinational Red Army would soon endure its greatest test by fire.

Military Mobilization and the Making of the Soviet Military Hierarchy, June 1941 to Fall 1943

The Dynamics of Exclusion: Kazakhs and other Suspect National Groups

The NKO directed conscription in Kazakhstan and all other Soviet regions during the war. Headed by Stalin from July 1941 to February 1946, the NKO managed all military districts [okrugs] in the Soviet Union and was responsible for staffing Red Army units with enlisted soldiers and officers.³² NKO officials oversaw a vast network of military commissariats located in the Soviet Union's provincial and district centers.³³ Along with regional Party committees and government soviets, these military commissariats were important centers of Soviet power in the countryside. During the 1930s and 1940s, the military commissars that headed these commissariats fulfilled a wide range of duties that reflected the Communist Party's goal of creating a militarized society. In addition to inducting conscripts and volunteers into the

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Reese, *Stalin's Reluctant Soldiers*, 15.

³² The Soviet Communist Party and Soviet Sovnarkom ordered the creation of the NKO in March 1934 by merging the Commissariats of Military and Naval Affairs. A. A. Grechko (ed.), *Sovetskaia voennaia entsiklopediia* (Moscow, 1978) vol. 5, 294-296.

³³ During the war, not all districts in Kazakhstan contained military commissariats. For example, only seven out of thirteen districts in Semei Province contained military commissariats in April 1942. APRK f. 708, o. 6/1, d. 1168, l. 11-12.

military, these military commissars provided pre-conscription training [*vseovobuch*] to local populations while providing monetary and material benefits to local veterans and their families.³⁴

During the war, military commissars began the conscription process by acquiring basic information about potential inductees such as their age, nationality, and employment status.³⁵ In ideal circumstances military commissariat officials studied potential conscripts at work and even examined them at home [*v bytu*] to identify occupational skills useful to the army. These officials then sent notices to inductees ordering them to report to conscription points attached to military commissariats. After arriving at these conscription points, Commissariat of Health (*komissariat zdravookhraneniia*) officials examined conscripts and determined whether they were too sick or malnourished for military service. During processing, military commissariat officials and NKVD officers interviewed conscripts and examined their police records to ascertain their “political attitudes” and their connections to “anti-Soviet individuals.” Military commissars barred any conscripts who were members of “enemy” classes such as kulaks or *bais* or individuals convicted for “counterrevolutionary” crimes from serving on the frontlines.³⁶ After the war began in June 1941, Nikolai Skvortsov, the head of the Kazakh Communist Party from 1938 to September 1945, ordered provincial and district Party committees to deploy their representatives to military commissariats to provide logistical and administrative support and to ensure the smooth implementation of military mobilization.³⁷

³⁴ P. I. Romanov, “Voennyi komissariat,” in Grechko, *Sovetskaia voennaia entsiklopediia*, vol. 2, 269-270.

³⁵ For a more detailed elaboration of this procedure, see “Dokladnaia zapiska po oboronno-mobilizatsionnym meropriiatiiam po sostoianiu na 1-e ianvaria 1942 g.” January 7, 1942. APRK f. 708, o. 5/1, d. 1108, l. 42-46.

³⁶ Reese, *Why Stalin's Soldiers Fought*, 126.

³⁷ For an elaboration of this process, see APRK f. 708, o. 5/1, d. 1115, l. 22-30.

Skvortsov's institutional and educational background put him in an ideal position to manage the mobilizational effort in Kazakhstan. Born into a peasant family in Astrakhan Province in 1899, Skvortsov served as a Red Army soldier during the Civil War and worked as a provincial Party apparatchik during the rest of the 1920s.³⁸ In 1930, Skvortsov enrolled in Moscow's Planning-Economic Institute and later in the decade, he worked for the Cadres' Administration of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party under the direction of Andrei Zhdanov and Georgii Malenkov.³⁹ Skvortsov's economic training, combined with the influence of his powerful patrons in Moscow, put him on a fast track to assume a high-ranking position in the Communist Party apparatus. He assumed this position in April 1938, when the Politburo of the Soviet Communist Party made him Second Secretary of the Kazakh Communist Party to help oversee the economic development of the republic's industrial and agricultural sectors.⁴⁰

It is not coincidental that Skvortsov arrived in Kazakhstan in the midst of a purge that was ravaging the Kazakh Communist Party apparatus. After the NKVD arrested First Secretary of the Kazakh Party Levon Mirzoyan in May 1938, Skvortsov assumed the title of First Secretary, thereby becoming the most powerful official in the republic.⁴¹ From May 1938 to June 1941, Skvortsov earned a reputation for being a stern and loyal enforcer of Stalinist policies such as indigenizing Kazakhstan's Party and government apparatuses and integrating the republic's industrial and agricultural sectors into the all-Union economy.⁴² After the Nazi invasion of the

³⁸ L. S. Akhmetova and V. K. Grigor'ev, *Pervye litsa Kazakhstana v stalinskuiu epokhu* (Almaty, 2010), 89.

³⁹ Ibid, 88-90.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 89-90.

⁴¹ Ibid, 90.

⁴² Ibid, 90-92.

Soviet Union, Skvortsov would apply his considerable administrative talents to mobilizing Kazakhstan for total war.



Figure 3: Nikolai Skvortsov, First Secretary of the Kazakh Communist Party, 1938-1945.

<https://ru.wikipedia.org>

During the first six months of the Great Patriotic War, the NKO quietly changed its conscription policies towards Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Tajiks, Turkmens, Uzbeks and other Central Asians. From June to December 1941, military commissariats in Kazakhstan and other Central Asian republics only inducted “European” citizens of the Soviet Union into combat units, which usually referred to Slavs but also to Tatars and some national minorities residing in the European parts of the Soviet Union.⁴³ The NKO continued to conscript Central Asians during this period,

⁴³ Belan, *Na vsekh frontakh*, 59-61. In the 1940s, Soviet authorities generally stopped using the terms “Western” and “Eastern” to categorize the nationalities of the Soviet Union and instead employed terms such as “European” and “Central Asian”. Like the older term “Western”, the word “European” referred to nationalities that were “developed” and not “backward”. See Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 23-24.

but instead of directing these conscripts into combat units as they did from 1928 to 1941, they shunted these inductees into unarmed labor battalions administered by the NKO but located far away from frontline areas and large cities. In a typical case, Head of the Military Section of the Semei Provincial Party Committee Atamanov reported to the Military Section of the Kazakh Communist Party that during a three-day period in October 1941 military commissariats in the region conscripted 353 “European” citizens and immediately sent 304 of them to frontline units.⁴⁴ During this same three-day period, military commissariats in the republic conscripted 511 “Central Asians” deemed capable of frontline service by Commissariat of Health officials. Instead of sending these conscripts to frontline units, however, military commissars directed them to work colonies and construction units in an unspecified region.⁴⁵

It is important to note that the NKO did not transfer Central Asians already serving in combat units to labor battalions after the Nazi invasion in the summer of 1941. For this reason, Kazakh and other Central Asian soldiers participated in the initial battles of the war. Several dozen Kazakhs, for example, fought against the Nazis during the heroic but hopeless defense of the Brest Fortress in June 1941.⁴⁶ During the first six months of the war, the NKO did not demonstrate unequivocal opposition to Central Asians serving in the Red Army, but there is little question that it sought to limit their representation in frontline units. The available archival evidence does not clearly indicate why the NKO barred new Central Asian conscripts from frontline service during this period.⁴⁷ In approaching this question, it is necessary to keep in

⁴⁴ “Dokladnaia zapiska po mobilizatsionno-oboronnym meropriatiiam na 1-e oktiabria 1941,” October 6, 1941. APRK f. 708, o. 5/1, d. 1116, l. 29-30.

⁴⁵ This report does not elaborate the nationalities of any of these conscripts.

⁴⁶ Grigor’ev, *Iarostnyi 1941*, 319-364.

mind that Central Asians were not the only group barred from frontline service after the beginning of the Great Patriotic War. From the summer of 1938 to April 1942, the NKO also forbade kulaks, their family members, and members of officially repressed diaspora nationalities from serving in combat units.⁴⁸ Wartime discrimination against the Soviet Union's diaspora nationalities, especially Bulgarians, Chinese, Finns, Iranians, Italians and Koreans, was a continuation of prewar repressive policies against groups who had a nominal homeland outside the Soviet Union.⁴⁹ During the late 1930s, the NKVD heavily persecuted these national diasporas because of their perceived connections to foreign states and their putative disloyalty to the Soviet Union. This terror campaign came to head in 1937-1938, when the NKVD began executing members of diaspora groups and deporting diaspora communities to Siberia, Kazakhstan, and other regions in the Soviet interior.⁵⁰ Because of these deportations, the number of Soviet citizens in Kazakhstan belonging to diaspora groups was substantial by 1941. For example, the Soviet Census of 1939 counted about 96,450 Soviet Koreans and approximately 55,000 Soviet Poles in Kazakhstan.⁵¹

Secret NKO directives issued from June to December 1941 often referred to Central Asians side by side with members of diaspora nationalities when discussing who was eligible for

⁴⁷ Post-Soviet Kazakhstani historians have not discussed this issue at significant length in their books and articles, probably because the NKO's discriminatory policies contradict the dominant patriotic view that Kazakhs fought bravely for the Soviet Union from the beginning of the war to its end.

⁴⁸ Reese, *Why Stalin's Soldiers Fought*, 126.

⁴⁹ For a list of Soviet diaspora nationalities according to the 1939 census, see Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 334-335.

⁵⁰ The historian Terry Martin estimates that a fifth of the total number of people arrested during the Great Terror of 1937-1938 were members of diaspora nationalities. The NKVD was far more likely to execute individuals arrested in these "national operations" compared to individuals who were not members of diaspora nationalities. Martin, "The Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing," *Journal of Modern History* vol. 70, (4): (1998), 813-861.

⁵¹ Poliakov, *Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naseleniia 1939 goda*, 75-76.

frontline service and who was not. For example, in September 1941 Brigade Commissar Shcherbakov, the Head of the Military Commissariat of the Kazakh SSR, issued a top-secret directive ordering military commissars in Kazakhstan to begin inducting volunteers into Red Army Airborne units.⁵² In his directive, Shcherbakov categorically forbade military commissars from inducting Soviet citizens who were Germans, Poles, Latvians, Estonians, Bulgarians, Koreans, Japanese, Chinese, and representatives of other “foreign” nationalities into the Airborne Forces. His decree also specified that members of “local indigenous nationalities” such as Kazakhs and Uzbeks could not join Airborne units and that only “Belarusians, Russians, and Ukrainians could become Airborne soldiers.” It is apparent that in the fall of 1941, NKO leaders did not trust Central Asians to bear arms in defense of the Soviet Union, and for this reason, NKO officials blocked them from entering Airborne and other combat units and relied instead on Slavic soldiers. A hierarchy of loyalty existed in the minds of NKO officials, and during the first six months of the war, Central Asians were located at the bottom of his hierarchy along with officially repressed populations.

According to the memoir of the Kazakh veteran Mukhamet Shayakhmetov, the policy of blocking Central Asians from combat units generated a tremendous amount of ill feeling among Kazakhs and non-Kazakhs alike at local conscription points. When Shayakhmetov and 80 other conscripts reported as ordered to a local conscription point in East-Kazakhstan Province in October 1941, they learned that the military commissar was turning Kazakhs away from frontline units.⁵³ Shayakhmetov observed that many Kazakhs interpreted this rebuff as an implicit

⁵² APRK f. 708, o. 5/1, d. 1120, l. 22-34. Stalin ordered the formation of the Airborne Forces on August 29, 1941. They were special Red Army troops under his personal command tasked with conducting special operations behind Nazi lines. “Polozhenie o vozdušno-desantnykh voiskakh Krasnoi Armii,” RGVA f. 4, o. 11, d. 65, l. 434-433 in V. A. Zolotarev (ed.), *Russkii arkhiv: Velikaia Otechestvennaia* (Moscow, 2002) 2 (2), 76-77. For a brief history of the wartime Airborne Forces, see Glantz, *Colossus Reborn*, 186-188.

accusation that they would surrender at the front or even defect to the enemy. According to him, he and his fellow Kazakhs were surprised and offended by this policy. The families of the Russians at this conscription point, in contrast, claimed that they were shouldering a disproportionate share of the military burden, and they demanded that the military commissar accept Kazakhs for frontline service. Reports from Party agitators indicate that Soviet citizens in Kazakhstan's other provinces had trouble understanding why military commissars were refusing to accept Kazakhs for frontline duty. For example, in July 1941 Director of the House of Party Enlightenment of Almaty City Pavel'ev reported to the directors of the Agitprop Section of the Kazakh Communist Party that local residents frequently asked him and his fellow agitators why the Red Army "was not taking [Kazakh] volunteers."⁵⁴ It would seem that many Slavs and Kazakhs in the republic believed official rhetoric proclaiming that all Soviet peoples shared a responsibility to defend the Soviet Motherland. When military commissars violated this principle by implementing different conscription policies for different nationalities, outrage and confusion was often the response.

In December 1941, the NKO suddenly reversed its policy of barring Central Asians from combat units and ordered local military commissars to begin send Kazakhs to the frontlines.⁵⁵ The NKO likely changed its policies towards Central Asians because the Red Army had sustained as many as 4,308,000 casualties by the end of 1941 and the Soviet high command (Stavka) was preparing a massive counteroffensive designed to fulfill Stalin's directive of

⁵³ Mukhamet Shayakhmetov, *The Silent Steppe: The Memoir of a Kazakh Nomad under Stalin* (New York, 2006), 260-263.

⁵⁴ "Dokladnaia zapiska o pročitannykh lektsiakh po Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine SSSR protiv germanskogo fashizma za vremia s 22.6 po 11.7.1941," APRK f. 708, o. 5/1, d. 588, l. 14-16.

⁵⁵ Belan, *Na vsekh frontakh*, 59-61.

“completely destroying the German-fascist forces and liberating the Soviet land from the Hitlerite swine.”⁵⁶ Not coincidentally, during the first three months of 1942 the NKO began mobilizing Soviet women for service in auxiliary military occupations such as nursing and issued a new regulation allowing women to volunteer for combat duty.⁵⁷ The Red Army clearly needed more personnel to achieve its strategic objectives, so the NKO opted to expand its conscription regime to encompass previously excluded population categories.⁵⁸

These alterations to the conscription regime certainly stemmed from the objective need to reinforce the Red Army, but the decision to induct Central Asians into combat units also indicated that NKO leaders trusted these nationalities to bear arms. After December 1941, military commissars in Kazakhstan and other regions continued to screen out certain population categories based on their perceived loyalty to the Soviet state. NKO conscription policies after December 1941 rearranged the Soviet Union’s hierarchy of loyalty by promoting the Kazakhs and other Central Asians to a position above that of suspect national groups. Members of diaspora nationalities and individuals from territories annexed by the Soviet Union in 1939 and 1940 occupied the bottom rung in this hierarchy.

Correspondence between Party officials in Kazakhstan indicates that the republic’s military commissars were very concerned with ensuring that no individuals from these population categories entered frontline units. In September 1942, for instance, Secretary of the

⁵⁶ Timofei Dmitriev, “‘Ne voz’mu nikogo, krome russkikh, ukraintsev i belorusov’: Natsional’noe voennoe stroitel’stvo v SSSR 1920-1930-kh gg. i ego ispytanie ‘ognem i mechom’ v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny,” *Agenstvo Politicheskikh Novostei*. August 8, 2013. <http://www.apn.ru/publications/article29935.htm>. Last accessed March 3, 2015. For the casualty figure, see Glantz, *Colossus Reborn*, 624. For the Soviet counteroffensive at Moscow, see Glantz, *When Titans Clashed*, 74-97.

⁵⁷ Reese, *Why Stalin’s Soldiers Fought*, 286-287.

⁵⁸ “Stenograma: Zasedaniia 7-go plenuma TsK KP(b)Kazakhstana,” July 5, 1942. APRK f. 708, o. 6, d. 14, l. 1.

Military Section of the Party Committee of Almaty Province Kul'kin sent a report to Head of the Military Section of the Kazakh Communist Party Petr Alekseev concerning the progress of conscription in the province.⁵⁹ According to Kul'kin, sometime before September 2, 1942, 9,188 men reported to local military commissariats for conscription. Sixty-eight of these men, however, were Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Bessarabians from territories annexed by the Soviet Union in 1939. In addition, 396 of these conscripts were Koreans or members of other “repressed nationalities” (the report does not indicate which). Kul'kin indicated that instead of sending these “suspect” conscripts to the front, military commissars deployed them to labor battalions located a significant distance from the frontlines.⁶⁰

In the fall of 1943, military commissars in Kazakhstan continued to report that they were efficiently screening out members of diaspora nationalities and sending them to labor battalions. One typical report from the Military Section of the Kazakh Communist Party to Head of the Red Army General Staff Georgii Zhukov indicated that from October 25 to November 15, 1943 military commissars in the republic summoned 35,110 “Europeans” to conscription points for assignment to military units.⁶¹ Military commissars screened out 1,285 of these inductees and assigned them to labor battalions because they were Germans, Turks, Bulgarians, and members

⁵⁹ “Dokladnaia zapiska o provedenii prizyva v Armiu grazhdan 1924 goda rozhdeniia po Alma-Atinskoi oblasti,” APRK f. 8 (Almaty Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan), o. 6, d. 591, l. 97. From 1924 to 1937, Alekseev was the commander of OGPU and NKVD border units located in Khabarovsk Krai and several other territories in Russia. From 1937 to 1941, Alekseev held a number of important government and Party positions in Kazakhstan including Director of the Military School of the Kazakh State University, Commissariat of Local Industry of the Kazakh SSR, and head of the Military Section of the Almaty Provincial Party Committee. He served as Director of the Military Section of the Kazakh Communist Party from 1941 to 1946. D. P. Ashimbaev, *Kto est' kto v Kazakhstane: Biograficheskaia entsiklopediia* (Almaty, 2012), 75.

⁶⁰ The NKO barred individuals from annexed areas from serving in combat units until the Red Army began liberating these territories in 1944. At this point, Soviet officials were interested in permanently Sovietizing these regions and saw the Red Army as an effective device for accomplishing this goal. See Sarsen Amanzholov, *Opyt politiko-vospitatel'noi raboty v deistvuiushchei armii* (Ust'-Kamenogorsk, 2010), 40.

⁶¹ “Dokladnaia zapiska: O voenno-mobilizatsionnoi i oboronno-massovoi rabote voennogo otdela TsK KP(b) Kazakhstana za 1943,” APRK f. 708, o. 7/1, d. 931, l. 37-58.

of other diaspora nationalities. The single most important factor that influenced NKO conscription policies towards non-Russians was whether the Soviet leadership perceived a group to be loyal to the Soviet Union. Being “European” did not help conscripts in the slightest if they happened to be members of diaspora nationalities or if they hailed from recently annexed territories – military commissars treated them as disloyal and assigned them to positions inside the Soviet military apparatus where they could not threaten either Soviet power or the war effort.

These were not the only groups excluded from the Soviet Union’s military fraternity during the war. Amir Weiner argues that during the last two years of the war and throughout the postwar period, Soviet authorities deliberately downplayed the military contributions of Jewish soldiers to the Soviet war effort.⁶² For Weiner, this was a strategy for excluding Jews from the Soviet community, since “It was a short step from the exclusion of Jews from the Soviet fighting family to their isolation from the Soviet family at large.”⁶³ Because the NKO conscripted Soviet Jews in large numbers and Jewish soldiers fought in every major battle of the war, Weiner is referring to an exclusion based on the rewriting of history and the deliberate distortion of facts. In the case of West Belarusians, West Ukrainians, Bessarabians, and members of the diaspora nationalities, exclusion was literal instead of retrospective. Unlike Soviet Jews, the NKO barred members of these groups from frontline service from the very beginning of the war because they did not consider them full-fledged members of the Soviet community. In contrast, by conscripting Kazakhs and other Central Asians into combat units, NKO leaders were placing these nationalities in an altogether different ideological category – that which included Soviet citizens loyal enough to defend the Motherland with arms in hand. At the same time, the NKO

⁶² Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, 216-235.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 229.

continued to discriminate against Kazakhs and other Central Asians, even if this discrimination took on more subtle forms after December 1941.

The Neglected Patriots: The Formation and Fate of the Kazakh National Units

In November 1941, Stalin reintroduced the Civil War practice of raising units organized according to the national principle by ordering the formation of special Red Army national units.⁶⁴ During the Great Patriotic War, the NKO oversaw the formation of sixty-six national brigades, regiments, and divisions. These units were “national” because they contained a large number of the titular nationals of their republics of origin, such as Azerbaijanis in Azerbaijan, Latvians in Latvia, and Kazakhs in Kazakhstan.⁶⁵ According to the military historian N. A. Kirsanov, national formations constituted about 10% of the total troop strength of the Red Army until July 1944, when the NKO officially disbanded them.⁶⁶ The national units were never very significant from a purely military perspective, but they were important symbols of the multinational Soviet effort to defeat the Axis invaders. In December 1941, the NKO ordered the formation of three national units in Kazakhstan - the 100th Independent Kazakh Rifle Brigade, the 101st Independent Kazakh Rifle Brigade, and the 102nd Kazakh Rifle Brigade.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ V. V. Gradosel'skii, “Natsional'nye voinskie formirovaniia v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine,” *Voennno-istoricheskii zhurnal*, vol. 1: (2002), 18-24.

⁶⁵ The number of national units formed by the SAVO in Central Asia was proportionate to the populations of these republics. In addition to the Kazakh units, the SAVO raised 15 Uzbek units, 7 Turkmen units, 4 Tajik units, and 3 Kyrgyz units. *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ N. A. Kirsanov, “Natsional'nye formirovaniia Krasnoi armii v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine, 1941-1956 godov,” *Otechestvennaia istoriia*, vol. 4: (1995), 116-126.

⁶⁷ Glantz, *Colossus Reborn*, 601.

For NKO and Kazakh Communist Party leaders, the Kazakh national formations were the application of “Leninist-Stalinist” nationality policies to the military sphere. Just as the Kazakhs had their own national territory, government, and Party, they would now have their own army units.⁶⁸ According to the Kazakhstani historian Pavel Belan, 26,261 Kazakh soldiers, the majority of whom were volunteers, fought in these national formations during the war.⁶⁹ This was a small number compared to the total number of Kazakhs who served in regular Red Army units, but NKO officials like Mikhail Kazakov attached “exceptional political significance” to these national units.⁷⁰ By creating these formations, NKO and Party leaders hoped to encourage the Kazakhs to fight for their socialist Motherland by reminding them of their “autonomous” national life and their patriotic duty to defend the “achievements of the October Revolution.”⁷¹

NKO leaders expected all national units to be fully capable of autonomous military action in cooperation with regular Red Army formations. In his instructions to Military Commissar of the Kazakh SSR Shcherbakov about forming the Kazakh national formations, Head of the Central Asian Military District Mikhail Kazakov stated that these units were to be “strong, united, trained, and well-supplied” and “capable of inflicting devastating blows against the fascist invaders.”⁷² The size of the Kazakh national brigades was consistent with regular Red Army brigades. For example, an inspection of the 101st Independent Rifle Brigade carried out by a team of NKO officials in Aqtöbe Province sometime before March 3, 1942, established that the

⁶⁸ Dmitriev, “‘Ne voz’mu nikogo, krome russkikh, ukraintsev i belorusov’.

⁶⁹ Belan, “*Na vsekh frontakh*”, 59.

⁷⁰ APRK f. 708, o. 5/1, d. 1125, l. 10-15. November 23, 1941.

⁷¹ Dmitriev, “‘Ne voz’mu nikogo, krome russkikh, ukraintsev i belorusov’”.

⁷² APRK f. 708, o. 5/1, d. 1125, l. 10-15.

unit contained 4,189 soldiers – an average number for a Soviet brigade at this time.⁷³ The NKO intended for the Kazakh national units to contain artillery sections, ample means of transportation (both automatic and animal), and anti-chemical warfare equipment – everything necessary for waging sustained warfare against the enemy.⁷⁴

None of the Kazakh national units consisted exclusively of Kazakhs. In a paradoxical but typically Stalinist formulation, these national units were to be both “national” and “international” in composition.⁷⁵ In his November 1941 instructions to Shcherbakov, Kazakov specified that if local military commissars could not locate enough junior and senior Kazakh officers to satisfy the requirements of these units, they were to recruit Russian officers instead.⁷⁶ Kazakov instructed Shcherbakov to ensure that these Russians did not harbor any “chauvinist attitudes,” although his decree did not specify how local military commissars were supposed to verify this. Russians did indeed constitute a significant proportion of the officers in the Kazakh national units, but Kazakh officers still predominated. For example, according to the NKO inspection of early March 1942, 198 (55.4%) of senior officers in the 101st Independent Rifle Brigade were Kazakhs and only 112 (31.3%) were Russians. 2,916 (94.5%) of the rank-and-file soldiers in this brigade were Kazakhs.⁷⁷

⁷³ For the figure about the 101st Independent Rifle Brigade, see “Pis'mo komandira, polkovnika 101-i OSB Iakovlenko o preprovozhdenii akta proverki ZhurVO o gotovnosti i obespechennosti brigady,” March 3, 1942. TsGARK (Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan) f. 1137, o. 18, d. 80, l. 49-56 in K. Abenov, *“Operatsiia ‘Mars’: Kazakhi v ‘doline smerti’* (Almaty, 2010), 114-124. From September 1941 to April 1942 Red Army brigades consisted of between 3,800 and 5,100 soldiers. Glantz, *Colossus Reborn*, 182.

⁷⁴ Abenov, *“Operatsiia ‘Mars’*, 114-124.

⁷⁵ Timothy K. Blauvelt, “Military Mobilisation and National Identity in the Soviet Union,” *War and Society*, vol. 21 (1): (2003), 41-62.

⁷⁶ APRK f. 708, o. 5/1, d. 1125, l. 10-15.

⁷⁷ Abenov, *“Operatsiia ‘Mars’*, 114-124.

Kazakhstan's military commissars succeeded in creating national units that were genuinely Kazakh in composition, even if Russian officers had substantial representation in these brigades. After military commissars finished assembling these units in December 1941, however, it quickly became apparent that local Party and soviet officials were failing to supply them in accordance with Kazakov's directives. Shortages of weapons and food, of course, were very common problems inside the wartime Red Army, especially during the first year of the Great Patriotic War.⁷⁸ Supplying the Kazakh National units proved to be particularly difficult, however, because the NKO did not include these brigades in the general mobilizational plan for the republic and instead made provincial Party organizations and government soviets responsible for providing their basic needs.⁷⁹ This method contrasted greatly with the procedure for supplying regular Red Army units. In the case of regular units, the NKO assumed direct control over supplies and drew on a vast network of depots and warehouses located throughout the Central Asian Military District.

This differentiated procedure for supplying regular and national units put the Kazakh national brigades at a distinct disadvantage in the competition over resources. The documentary record indicates that NKO officials like Kazakov did not deliberately ignore the supply and equipment needs of the Kazakh national brigades, but neither did the NKO demonstrate a sustained commitment in providing these units with what they needed to stand a fighting chance against the enemy. In general, NKO officials treated the Kazakh national brigades as auxiliary propaganda symbols rather than military formations capable of sustained operations on the frontlines. The Kazakh national units, in short, were low on the NKO's list of priorities.

⁷⁸ Merridale, *Ivan's War*, 161-162.

⁷⁹ APRK f. 708, o. 5, d. 344, l. 114. November 5, 1941. See also Blauvelt, "Military Mobilisation and National Identity in the Soviet Union," 52.

There is evidence that the supply problem became an urgent problem as early as December 1941. In this month, the Central Committee of the Kazakh Communist Party sent an unsigned letter to the Party Committee of Aqtöbe Province criticizing district Party officials for failing to ensure that Kazakhs travelling to join the 101st Independent Rifle Brigade received adequate food and clothing.⁸⁰ According to this report, soldiers in Novo-Rossiisk district received 50-55% of the food and other supplies they were entitled to, while this percentage hovered at a mere 30% in Märtök district. It seems that local officials lacked the capacity or the will to supply the Kazakh national brigades. Given that a food crisis existed in Kazakhstan throughout much of the Great Patriotic War (see Chapter Three), it is very possible that these Party and government officials were attempting to keep meager food supplies inside their districts so local residents would not go hungry. For these officials, it may have made more political and economic sense to feed local collective farmers and workers rather than soldiers leaving for the front.

Supply and equipment problems inside the Kazakh national units worsened in the months ahead. A March 1942 report compiled by representatives of the Kazakh Sovnarkom, Kazakh Communist Party, and SAVO concerning the state of readiness of the 100th Independent Kazakh Rifle Brigade based in Almaty city uncovered woeful equipment shortages.⁸¹ Despite the fact that the brigade had existed for almost four months, its soldiers had almost no weapons at their disposal with which to train. The brigade's commander, Lieutenant Colonel Shevstov, estimated that the unit should have been equipped with 492 PPSH-41 submachine guns, 482 rifles, 56

⁸⁰ "O proverke vypolneniia zadaniia26 po obmunirovaniu v N-Rossiiskom, Stepnom i Martuiskom raionakh dlia formirovaniia natsional'noi chasti," December 20, 1941 APRK f. 708, o. 5/1, d. 1125, l. 59.

⁸¹ "Akt sdachi-priema 100-i Otdel'noi strelkovoii brigady, sformirovannoi po Direktive #894 GKO ot 13 noiabria 1941 g." March 4, 1942. TsGARK f. 1137, o. 18, d. 80, l. 1-13 in Abenov, "*Operatsiia 'Mars,'*" 134-144.

mortars, 24 artillery pieces, and various other weapons.⁸² According to this report, the brigade's entire arsenal consisted of a paltry 23 pistols. The unit was also desperately short of basic battlefield necessities such as binoculars, gasmasks, and radio equipment. Clearly, local Party and government officials were failing to provide this unit with the equipment it needed to operate effectively on the frontlines.

After the war, some former Red Army soldiers interpreted equipment and supply shortages as a sign of intentional neglect and as evidence that Soviet leaders did not trust Central Asian soldiers. For example, a Tatar who served as an officer during the war and who was later interviewed for the Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System in the early 1950s claimed that Soviet authorities refused to give any weapons other than “dummy guns” to an Uzbek national division assembled in Tashkent.⁸³ According to this former officer, military officials only provided rifles to these soldiers after they arrived on the battlefield in the Moscow region – far too late to become qualified with these weapons. An Uzbek soldier who defected to the Nazi-created Turkestan Legion and who later participated in the Harvard Project told a similar story. According to him, NKO officials only provided Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tajik, Turkmen, and Uzbek units with one training rifle per brigade because they were unwilling to arm large concentrations of Central Asians located deep within the Soviet home front.⁸⁴ These two respondents did not provide any more details concerning their impressions of the Central Asian national units, but they clearly felt that NKO officials were discriminating against them and that they were indifferent to the fates of Central Asian soldiers on the battlefield.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule B, Vol. 1, Case 77, 4-5. The NKO created eight Uzbek national units in December 1941. Glantz, *Colossus Reborn*, 601.

⁸⁴ Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule B, Vol. 8, Case 221, 12-13.

If these testimonies are accurate, it is likely that the Central Asian soldiers who fought in these units resented the fact that they were at a decisive battlefield disadvantage compared to soldiers in regular Red Army formations. These arms shortages were an aspect of a more generalized logistics and command crisis inside the national units. For example, during their campaigns along the Kalinin Front in the fall of 1942, the 100th and 101st Kazakh Rifle Brigades had very few artillery pieces at their disposal and only a handful of tanks and planes.⁸⁵ These Kazakh infantrymen had no choice but to assault the enemy without the cover of these war machines, invariably suffering large-scale casualties as a result.⁸⁶ Tragically, these kinds of problems were not specific to Central Asian units. For example, in the fall of 1941 the 89th Armenian Rifle Division suffered terrible casualties during its first battle in the North Caucasus because of inter-unit communication failures, a lack of effective reconnaissance, and shortages of important battlefield equipment. During this battle, 400 members of the division went over to the enemy. High casualty rates were probably a major factor leading to these mass defections.⁸⁷

By the beginning of 1945, the NKO had dissolved the majority of the Soviet national formations and merged them into regular army divisions.⁸⁸ The 100th Kazakh Rifle Brigade fought on until Soviet victory in May 1945, but the NKO dissolved the 101st Independent Rifle

⁸⁵ These brigades were part of the 39th Army during the Battles of Rzhev (January 1942 – March 1943). For a detailed operational history of the 100th Independent Rifle Brigade, albeit one that does not significantly depart from official Soviet descriptions of this unit, see S. S. Dzhenbaev, *Sotaiia kazakhskaiia! Boevoi put' 100-i otdel'noi kazakhskoi strelkovoii brigady: voenno-istoricheskii ocherk* (Almaty, 2000).

⁸⁶ Kozybaev, *Istoricheskii opyt zashchity Otechestva*, 260.

⁸⁷ Dmitriev, “Ne vos'mu nikogo, krome russkikh, ukrainsev i belorusov’.

⁸⁸ According to Pavel Belan, the dissolution of the national brigades was part of the NKO's policy of converting brigades into divisions to simplify command and control during large-scale operations. Kozybaev, *Istoricheskii opyt zashchity Otechestva*, 261. For an elaboration of this policy as applied to regular brigades, see Glantz, *Colossus Reborn*, 182.

Brigade and the 102nd Rifle Brigade in July 1944.⁸⁹ By this time, the two brigades had suffered terrible casualties and were not combat capable,⁹⁰ but the NKO could have reformed these units by transferring some of the hundreds of thousands of Kazakhs still in uniform. NKO leaders had made their preference for regular Red Army units clear. During the remainder of the war, the NKO focused on forming and maintaining multinational Red Army units not connected to specific nationalities or regions. Kazakh soldiers continued to defend the Soviet Motherland, but they did so in regular units based fully on the “internationalist” principle. It seems that the national units were a useful propaganda device for the Communist Party, but the NKO was concerned above all with creating combat-effective formations. Overall, NKO officials did not consider the Kazakh national units to be the most effective means of integrating Kazakh soldiers into the war effort.

Attempting to Bring to Order to Chaos: The Conscription Process in Kazakhstan

Since 1991, Kazakhstani historians have portrayed military mobilization in wartime Kazakhstan as a seamless and straightforward process. Taking their cue from Soviet propagandists, these historians maintain that in the weeks after the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union, Kazakhs and Slavs enthusiastically trekked to military commissariats to volunteer for frontline service.⁹¹ According to these scholars, military commissars quickly registered these recruits, after which they expeditiously travelled to the front to the enormous fanfare of family members and other locals in *auls* and cities. Memoirs written by Kazakh veterans, even those

⁸⁹ Glantz, *Colossus Reborn*, 600-602.

⁹⁰ Dzhienbaev, *Sotaia kazakhskaia*, 164-192.

⁹¹ See in particular Belan, *Na vsekh frontakh*, 54-83; Grigor'ev, *Iarostnyii 1941*, 128-139.

published after the advent of glasnost in 1985, also tend to present military induction in this idealized manner. For example, M. K. Kenbaev writes that when he and his fellow students at the Aqtöbe Pedagogical College learned about the formation of the 101st Kazakh National Rifle Brigade in December 1941, they unanimously decided to travel to the local military commissariat to join it.⁹² According to Kenbaev, one overriding impulse inspired these students – the desire to defend their Soviet motherland.

It is almost certainly true that some Kazakhs volunteered for frontline service because they were loyal to the Soviet Union and felt obligated to defend it. Wartime reports produced by the Military Section of the Kazakh Communist Party, however, only rarely refer to military volunteers [*dobrovoltsy*], and usually use the word conscripts [*voennoobiazannye* or *prizyvniki*] to refer to military inductees in Kazakhstan, especially those serving in regular Red Army units. This suggests that the number of Kazakh volunteers remained small throughout the war.⁹³ Because available NKO and Kazakh Communist Party reports only intermittently refer to the nationality of military inductees, it is not possible to determine how many Kazakhs volunteered for military service versus the number conscripted by military commissars. In the wartime Soviet Union as a whole, city residents and Communist Party or Komsomol members were more likely to volunteer for military service compared to collective farmers and non-Party citizens.⁹⁴ Because the majority of Kazakhs lived in the countryside in 1941, it is reasonable to hypothesize that relatively few volunteered to become soldiers compared to Slavs.

⁹² “Iz vospominanii veterana 101-i otdel’noi strelkovoii natsional’noi brigady M. K. Kenbaeva,” February 1986, in Abenov, “*Operatsiia ‘Mars,’*” 231-233.

⁹³ It is important to keep in mind that most people who served in the Red Army during the Great Patriotic War were conscripts rather than volunteers. Reese, *Why Stalin’s Soldiers Fought*, 130.

⁹⁴ Reese, *Why Stalin’s Soldiers Fought*, 104-105.

The conscription process was far more ad hoc and problem-ridden than Soviet propagandists and post-Soviet historians in Kazakhstan have suggested. Conscription was a chaotic affair throughout the Soviet Union, and malfeasance and incompetence on the part of local military commissars frequently endangered the ability of the NKO to reinforce the fighting Red Army. These problems were particularly acute in Kazakhstan because of endemic corruption among local military commissars, the inability of Slavic military commissars to communicate with Kazakh-speaking government officials in the countryside, and the geographic distance of Kazakh *auls* from conscription points. During the war, NKO and Party officials struggled to overcome these barriers to mass mobilization, but these authorities remained committed to the mass mobilization of the Kazakhs for military service. These officials had the political will to conscript the Kazakhs; it was capacity on the ground that was often lacking

In the winter of 1942, the Soviet General Staff began preparing a massive counteroffensive in Ukraine, prompting NKO officials to intensify military mobilization throughout the Soviet Union and verify that military commissars were conscripting reinforcements in the most efficient manner possible.⁹⁵ NKO leaders expressed shock at what they discovered. In April 1942, Army Commissar Efim Shchadenko, the Deputy Defense Commissar of the USSR, issued a directive to all military commissars in the Soviet Union highlighting the findings of an NKO investigation undertaken in several Soviet regions in February and March 1942.⁹⁶ These investigators uncovered a litany of “outrages”, cases of “neglect”, and numerous “anti-state” practices inside military commissariats that were severely

⁹⁵ Glantz, *When Titans Clashed*, 105-107.

⁹⁶ “Prikaz o rabote voenkomatov po uchetu voennoobiazannykh i ikh prizyvu,” April 14, 1942. RGVA (Russian State Military Archive) f. 4 (People’s Commissariat of Defense of the USSR), o. 11, d. 70, l. 137-145 in Zolotarev, *Russkii arkhiv* 2 (2): 207-212.

undermining military mobilization. According to Shchadenko, medical officials in many Soviet regions were illegally exempting conscripts from military service by erroneously registering them as sick or as having physical deformities. In Shchadenko's estimation, this was probably in return for bribes. In some districts of Russia's Voronezh Province, NKO investigators discovered that as many as 38% of conscripts declared unfit for military duty were perfectly suitable for frontline service.⁹⁷ This report also noted that many military commissars in the Soviet Union were neglecting their paperwork to such an extent that they had no idea how many citizens they had conscripted and how many they still had to conscript to fulfill NKO directives. The upshot of Shchadenko's report was obvious – the Soviet Union's military commissariat system was in crisis.

According to Shchadenko, these conscription-related problems were especially pervasive and severe in Kazakhstan.⁹⁸ The February-March NKO investigation revealed that "almost all" military commissars in Kazakhstan were illegally exempting local citizens from military service. According to these investigators, this practice was endemic to the republic's military commissariat network from top to bottom. For example, Head of the Military Commissariat of the Kazakh SSR Shcherbakov illegally exempted 75 citizens from military service from June 1941 to February 1942, while Senior Political Officer Malyginym, the Military Commissar of the Stalin District in Almaty city, illegally protected 179 people from conscription. Although Shchadenko did not indicate why Kazakhstan's military commissars were so prone to exempt conscripts from frontline service, there is evidence that they were demonstrating favoritism towards recruits of their own nationality. A report sent by Head of the NKVD organization of

⁹⁷ The report does not specify how many total conscripts there were in Voronezh Province.

⁹⁸ Zolotarev, *Russkii arkhiv* 2 (2), 210.

Semei province Poludov to the Central Committee of the Kazakh Communist Party in April 1942 elaborated an example of this phenomenon.⁹⁹ According to Poludov, the military commissar of Maqanshy district, a man named Aminbaev, received a specific order to send Kazakhs into the army, but he sent Russians instead. In this case, the accused official was Kazakh, but according to Poludov, Slavic military commissars were also apt to grant illegal exemptions to acquaintances and friends. For example, this report indicated that the military commissar of Semei city's Lenin District, Captain Kozlov, frequently exempted conscripts from military induction in return for unspecified "refreshments" [*ugoshcheniia*].¹⁰⁰ The similarities in the content of NKO and NKVD investigative reports about conscription in Kazakhstan suggests that corruption and favoritism among the republic's military commissars were very real problems, and these problems were rooted in the venality of individual military commissars and the endurance of patronage networks based at least partially on nationality.

Shchadenko's allegations were serious, but they were only the tip of the iceberg. Because of the negligence of individual military commissars and the chaotic nature of conscription, conscripts often endured shockingly bad living conditions inside Kazakhstan's conscription points. Occasionally, military commissars could not send conscripts to their frontline units in a timely manner because of the limited number of trains in the republic. This often led to severe overcrowding on the grounds of military commissariats. In these conditions, waiting soldiers quickly ran out of food and sanitary conditions rapidly deteriorated.¹⁰¹ Süleimen

⁹⁹ "Spravka o nedochetakh v rabote oblvoenkomata i raivoenkomatov Semipalatinskoi oblasti sostavlena 6-go apreilia 1942," APRK f. 708, o. 6/1, d. 1168, l. 7-9.

¹⁰⁰ Poludov's report also mentioned that Kozlov frequently drank at work, suggesting that these "refreshments" were alcoholic.

¹⁰¹ For a typical report from South-Kazakhstan Province that highlighted these issues in military commissariats, see APRK f. 708, o. 6/1, d. 1194, l. 121. October 14, 1942.

Bekenov, a Kazakh conscript who arrived at a military commissariat in Kzyl-Orda Province in January 1942, describes these poor conditions in his memoir.¹⁰² According to Bekenov, drinking water quickly ran out and many Kazakh recruits could do nothing but sit and sob silently without any way to relieve their thirst. Several [*bīrneshe*] of these conscripts died from dehydration – military commissariat officials either refused to give them water or had none to give. Some military commissars knowingly let abysmal conditions inside conscription points fester. According to the NKVD investigatory report about conscription in Semei city cited above, Captain Kozlov was so negligent in discharging his duties that the grounds of the military commissariat under his jurisdiction were perpetually “covered with filth” and remained unheated during winter months.¹⁰³ This lack of sanitation resulted in a typhus outbreak so severe that NKO officials had no choice but to quarantine these buildings.¹⁰⁴

NKO, NKVD, and Party investigators continued to express concern about the corruption and ineptitude of Kazakhstan’s military commissars during the remainder of the war.¹⁰⁵ These investigators were keenly aware that many conscription-related problems in the republic were the result of language barriers and the isolation of many *auls* – problems that were difficult if not impossible to remedy in a short amount of time. An insurmountable language barrier often existed between the Russian officials who often administered Kazakhstan’s military commissariats and the Kazakh officials who managed local soviets and economic enterprises. In

¹⁰² Süliemen Bekenov, *Qazaq tūtqyny* (Almaty, 2007), 46.

¹⁰³ APRK f. 708, o.6/1, d. 1168, l. 7-9.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ For example, in April 1943, Alekseev and Skvortsov reported to Zhukov that a Party inspection uncovered 1,664 new conscripts in Kazakhstan who had been registered two times or more by military commissars, had been transferred to the officer corps but remained on military commissariat registries as rank-and-file personnel, or who were already at the front. APRK f. 708, o. 7/1, d. 930, l. 90-105.

November 1941, Head of the Military Section of the Party Committee of East-Kazakhstan Province Kolmakov sent an indicative report to the Kazakh Party Central Committee indicating that the registration of conscripts was proceeding in an “unacceptable” manner in four districts with predominately Kazakh populations.¹⁰⁶ According to Kolmakov, the main problem was that Slavs dominated managerial positions inside these military commissariats and Kazakh officials in charge of local agricultural soviets had poor Russian language skills and could not communicate the educational and occupational qualifications of conscripts to these Slavic military commissars. This made it extremely difficult for these commissars to assign conscripts to construction battalions and combat units, thereby undermining the military mobilization campaign in the region.

Two years later, the leaders of the Kazakh Communist Party voiced serious concern that the republic’s military commissars were failing to mobilize Kazakhs on a mass basis because they were ignoring the geographical and social particularities of the Kazakh countryside. A particularly revealing report sent by Skvortsov and Alekseev to Zhukov indicated that a “significant number” of Kazakh conscripts had failed to appear at military commissariats as ordered from January to July 1943.¹⁰⁷ According to Skvortsov and Alekseev, the problem was that many *auls* were located as many as 190 miles from the nearest military commissariat. Upon receiving their notices, conscripts often had to travel to conscription points on foot, even in very harsh winter conditions. As a result, many of these conscripts arrived late or not at all. This

¹⁰⁶ “Dokladnaia o vypolnenii direktivnogo ukazaniia TsK KP/b/Kazakhstana i SNK Kazakhskoi SSR i Kazakhskogo voenkomata ot 5 sentiabria 1941 goda “O nedochetakh v rabote po provedeniu prizyva i voenno-postavok v Kazakhskoi SSR po VK oblasti na 5.11.1941” APRK f. 708, o. 5/1, d. 1116, l. 116-119.

¹⁰⁷ “O voenno-mobilizatsionnoi i oboronnoi rabote voennogo otdela TsK KP/b/K za period s 1.1 po 1.7.1943,” APRK f. 708, o. 7/1, d. 930, l. 90-105.

report also indicated that during the first seven months of 1942, 2,035 conscripts in Kazakhstan failed to show at conscription points because they were herding livestock in faraway pastures.¹⁰⁸

The available records of the NKO and Kazakh Communist Party indicate that during the Great Patriotic War there was no mass resistance to conscription among Kazakhs on the scale of the 1916 rebellion. Nevertheless, it is clear that Shchadenko, Skvortsov, and Alekseev considered conscription-related problems to be more common among Kazakhs than Slavs. In assessing this perspective, it is important to keep in mind that conscription evasion was a pervasive problem in many Soviet regions during the war, not just in Kazakhstan. Officially, approximately 500,000 Soviet citizens illegally evaded conscription from June 1941 to May 1945.¹⁰⁹ Officials inside the NKO and Kazakh Communist Party, rather than blaming Kazakh conscripts for their failure to report to military commissariats, usually pointed to the corruption of military commissars, language barriers, and the isolation of Kazakh *auls* as the principle factors stymieing military mobilization in the republic. After December 1941, high-level officials inside the NKO and Kazakh Party apparatuses did not question whether the Kazakhs were ready for mass mobilization into the military. The debate was not about whether the conscription of the Kazakhs was a viable goal; rather, it was about how best to accomplish this objective in Kazakhstan's complicated bureaucratic, linguistic, and geographic environment.

The republic's Party and government authorities attempted to deter Kazakhs and Slavs from evading conscription by using the same basic methods employed by Soviet officials in other regions. In January 1942, Shchadenko ordered Party and government officials in the

¹⁰⁸ Based on this report, it is unclear whether these Kazakhs were unaware that they had been called up by military commissars or if they willfully ignored these summonses.

¹⁰⁹ G. F. Krivosheev and A. V. Kirilin, *Velikaia Otechestvennaia bez grifa sekretnosti: kniga poter'* (Moscow, 2010), 41.

Soviet Union to intensify the fight against conscription evasion.¹¹⁰ In response, Kazakhstan's military commissars, army officers, police [*militsiia*] and Kazakh NKVD officers began launching periodic sweeps and raids in dormitories, cafeterias, markets, parks and other public places in cities and *auls* to verify military documents and round up citizens attempting to avoid military duty.¹¹¹ Punishments for conscription evasion ranged from a 100-ruble fine, assignation to a construction battalion, to a sentence in a corrective-labor camp.¹¹² These regulations applied to all citizens in the republic eligible for conscription, Kazakhs and non-Kazakhs alike. By threatening the Kazakh population with these punishments, the NKO was signaling that the Kazakh people were an integral part of the war effort subject to mass mobilization.

In the fall of 1943, the General Staff and GKO were preparing summer offensives aimed at pushing the Nazis out of the Soviet Union, and military mobilization continued at a frenetic pace throughout the Soviet Union.¹¹³ In October 1943, the NKO, Kazakh Sovnarkom, and the Kazakh Communist Party attempted to relieve pressure on the republic's strained conscription network by forming 37 additional district-level military commissariats.¹¹⁴ Shchadenko, Skvortsov, and Alekseev never attempted to reform Kazakhstan's military commissariat network to account for the bureaucratic, linguistic, and geographical particularities of the Kazakh

¹¹⁰ "Prikaz o poriadke peredvizheniia voennoobiazannykh v voennoe vremia i merakh bor'by s ukloneniem ot ucheta, prizyva i mobilizatsii," January 24, 1942. RGVA f. 4, o. 11, d. 69, l. 185-189. In Zolotarev, *Russkii arkhiv* 2 (2), 146-147.

¹¹¹ For a report on results of these raids in Almaty city, see APRK f. 708, o. 6/1, d. 1181, l. 47-57. May 15, 1942.

¹¹² "Dokladnaia zapiska: ob itogakh provedennogo prizyva i pereucheta voenno-obiazannykh po Alma-Atinskoi oblasti za period s 28.2 – 15.3.1942," APRK f. 708, o. 6, d. 2500, l. 9-15. To further discourage conscription evasion, immediate family members living in the same home as evaders were arrested and sentenced them to five-years in the Gulag. Reese, *Why Stalin's Soldiers Fought*, 130, 169.

¹¹³ Glantz, *When Titans Clashed*, 195-201.

¹¹⁴ "O dopolnitel'nom formirovanii raivoenkmatov," November 26, 1943. APRK f. 708, o. 7/1, d. 939, l. 202-203; "O khode formirovaniia novykh raivoenkmatov po Kazakhskoi SSR," November 26, 1943, Ibid, 206-209.

countryside. Instead, they limited their initiatives to establishing additional military commissariats and dismissing “unsuitable” military commissars.¹¹⁵ This failure to adapt seriously hampered military mobilization in the republic. The effort to mobilize the Kazakhs for military service was genuine and real, but Kazakhstan’s military commissars never achieved the level of efficiency demanded by NKO leaders.

Additional Barriers to Integration: Unofficial Discrimination against Kazakh Soldiers

According to Soviet propagandists and post-Soviet Kazakhstani historians, the wartime Red Army was a “friendship of peoples” and all soldiers who fought under the Soviet banner had the same rights and duties regardless of nationality. In practice, this oversimplified perspective was often false. Overt and subtle forms of discrimination against Kazakhs and other non-Russians were rampant on the battlefields of the Great Patriotic War. This discrimination took two major forms: institutional and unofficial. On an institutional level, many NKO and Red Army policies placed Kazakh soldiers in a position of de facto inferiority to Russian soldiers. At an unofficial level, illegal discrimination and abuse at the hands of Red Army officers frequently reminded Kazakhs that they were not equal to Russians and other Slavs.

This section argues that unofficial discrimination against Kazakhs and other non-Slavs was rooted in a belief among individual NKO officials and Red Army officers that these groups were less reliable and loyal than other Soviet soldiers, especially Russians. One manifestation of this attitude was the practice of blocking individual Kazakhs from serving in frontline units, even after the NKO began conscripting Central Asians en masse in December 1941. This dynamic is particularly apparent in the memoirs of Kazakhs who served in the Red Army Air Force. The

¹¹⁵ In April 1942, Shchadenko ordered NKO officials in all Soviet regions to investigate military commissariats and dismiss all corrupt and inept commissars. Zolotarev, *Russkii arkhiv* 2 (2), 210-211.

famed bomber pilot Talghat Bigeldinov offers a particularly poignant perspective on discrimination against Kazakhs in the Air Force. Bigeldinov was training at the Saratov Air School to become an Ilyushin bomber pilot when the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union.¹¹⁶ When he and his fellow cadets heard about the invasion, they immediately issued a request to their commander to deploy them to the front, and they even offered to serve as infantrymen if no planes were available. This commander (who goes unnamed in the memoir) quickly sent Bigeldinov's Slavic companions to frontline aviation units, but he refused to allow the Kazakh pilot to accompany them and he offered no explanation to the exasperated Bigeldinov.¹¹⁷ The commanders of his training unit did finally send Bigeldinov to a frontline Ilyushin unit, but not until December 1942.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Talgat Begel'dinov, *Pike v bessmertie: khronika podviga letchikov-shturmovikov* (Almaty, 2000), 14-18. Bigeldinov was born into a family of nomads in Aqmola Province in 1922. He volunteered to become a military pilot. Ibid, 4-9.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 18-19.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 26-27.



Figure 4: Talghat Bigeldinov, 1922-2014

Sometime later, Bigeldinov became the commander of his Ilyushin regiment and he discovered that Ukrainians, Tatars, Bashkirs, Uzbeks and members of other nationalities were serving as pilots in the four squadrons he commanded, but there were no Kazakh pilots besides him.¹¹⁹ According to Bigeldinov, he wished to find a Kazakh pilot in order to speak Kazakh, reminisce about Kazakhstan, and share stories from the front, but the only other Kazakhs serving in the regiment were mechanics.¹²⁰ Bigeldinov found this fact disturbing because Ilyushin pilots were an elite group within the Red Army – Soviet propagandists described them as “Stalinist eagles” who used their advanced piloting skills to inflict devastating blows against the enemy.

¹¹⁹ Bigeldinov does not make it clear exactly when he became regimental commander.

¹²⁰ Bigeldinov, *Pike v bessmertie*, 159.

Bigeldinov was concerned that Red Army Air Force officers were intentionally barring Kazakhs from these elite aviation units. When Bigeldinov pointed out his concerns to the regiment's political workers, he claims that they brushed his worries aside, claiming that the absence of Kazakh pilots was a "coincidence" and that, in general, the Kazakhs were contributing to the war effort on par with other Soviet nationalities.¹²¹ Bigeldinov was not satisfied with this perfunctory explanation, but he never learned why the number of Kazakh Ilyushin pilots was so paltry.

¹²¹ Ibid.



Figure 5: “Glory to the heroes of the Fatherland War! Glory to the Stalinist falcons!”

P. Vandyshev and L. Torich, 1941
<http://www.krasnoyeznamya.ru/picd.php?vrub=rm&pid=41&picid=2501>

Other Kazakh veterans who fought as Red Army combat pilots have noted that it was very difficult for them to join frontline units, and some of their experiences were remarkably similar to Bigeldinov’s. For example, in his memoir the veteran Ilyushin pilot Kamash Begimov writes that after he completed flight school in Molotov sometime during the summer or fall of 1941, he asked his commanding officers to deploy him to a frontline aviation unit.¹²² Instead of sending Begimov to the front, these officers ordered him to join a training squadron located far

¹²² Begimov was born into a family of nomads in Qaraghanda Province in 1920. He enlisted in the army in 1939 and his superiors ordered him to attend flight school to become a combat pilot. Kamash Begimov, *Razreshite vzlet* (Alma-Ata, 1989), 7-38.

to the east of Moscow.¹²³ According to Begimov, these officers were deliberately preventing him from fighting at the front despite his desperate desire to contribute to the war effort. He repeatedly asked his commanding officers why they were deploying all the trainees in his unit to the front except him, but he received no satisfactory answer. According to Begimov, he did not fly any worse than these other pilots, yet “some force” [*kakaia-to sila*] prevented him from joining his fellow pilots at the front. It was not until December 1943 that Begimov’s superiors finally deployed him to a frontline Ilyushin unit based in Ukraine.¹²⁴

Like Bigeldinov, Begimov never explicitly states in his memoir that his superior officers discriminated against him because he was Kazakh. Still, it is apparent that there were very real barriers to the integration of Kazakhs into frontline aviation units. Until the Russian government makes the relevant wartime records of the NKO and Red Army available to researchers, it is necessary to speculate as to the why Bigeldinov and Begimov’s officers prevented them from joining frontline units. The small representation of Kazakhs among Ilyushin pilots may not have been the result of conscious NKO policy. It is important to keep in mind that becoming a Red Army combat pilot required excellent Russian-language knowledge as well as solid secondary and technical education.¹²⁵ This was particularly true for Ilyushin pilots, since the plane was particularly complex and very technologically advanced. Because the majority of Kazakhs inducted into the army during the war came from rural backgrounds, it is logical to theorize that most did not have the necessary educational backgrounds to become combat pilots. It is also possible, however, that a culture of bigotry existed inside the NKO and Red Army Air Force that

¹²³ Begimov, *Razreshite vzlet*, 58-61.

¹²⁴ Ibid, 61.

¹²⁵ Anna Krylova, *Soviet Women in Combat: A History of Violence on the Eastern Front* (Cambridge UK, 2010), 126.

gave birth to a self-fulfilling prophesy. NKO officials and Red Army officers probably resisted deploying Kazakh pilots to the front because they assumed that these Kazakhs lacked the proper technical training, making it impossible for these pilots to improve their flying skills. It is possible that because of this discrimination, relatively few Kazakhs became Soviet combat pilots during the war, which reinforced the bigoted notion that Kazakh military personnel were not as capable as their Slavic counterparts of mastering advanced technical professions.¹²⁶

Red Army Air Force officers were not the only authority figures inside the Soviet military who were prejudiced against Kazakh soldiers. In the Soviet ground forces, Red Army officers often directed their prejudice in a generalized manner against Central Asians and other non-Russian minorities. Unit commanders in the army, for example, sometimes relegated Kazakh and other non-Russian infantrymen to unpleasant grunt work during frontline battles. In his memoir about his wartime experiences, the Kazakh veteran Süleimen Bekenov describes a vivid example of this phenomenon. While he was fighting in Ukraine with the 103rd Division of the 6th Army sometime in late 1943, an unidentified regimental commander ordered his Slavic subordinates to keep all “national minorities” away from combat so they could stay behind the frontlines and perform heavy labor such as digging trenches.¹²⁷ Bekenov recalls that he and his fellow Central Asian soldiers were powerless to challenge this “illegal order” – all they could do

¹²⁶ Other Kazakhs who served as Red Army pilots during the war also recall that their commanders continuously blocked them from participating in frontline operations. The veteran Baizulla Akizhanov (born in Pavlodar Province in 1923), for example, maintains that from 1942 to 1944 his commanders blocked him from participating in combat operations with his fellow Ilyushin pilots, despite the fact that he flew at the same level or better compared to the other pilots in his squadron. By the end of the war he participated in 17 combat flights (mostly over Berlin and Prague), but he had to fight for his right to participate in these operations. Akizhanov believes that some of this discrimination may have been because the police arrested his older brother during the 1930s for being an “enemy of the people”. Given the striking similarities between the discrimination experienced by Bigeldinov, Begimov, and Akizhanov, however, it seems that the dominant factor was their Kazakh nationality. “Akizhanov Baizulla Akizhanovich,” *Ia pomniu*. http://iremember.ru/memoirs/letchiki-shturmoviki/akizhanov-bayzulla-akizhanovich/?sphrase_id=9726, last accessed April 3, 2015.

¹²⁷ Bekenov, *Qazaq tūtqyny*, 61.

was “grit their teeth and pick up their shovels.”¹²⁸ This discriminatory order deeply offended Bekenov because political officers had repeatedly told him that the Red Army was a “socialist brotherhood” which did not discriminate against soldiers of different nationalities.¹²⁹ The disturbed Bekenov discovered that these platitudes were patently false in practice.



Figure 6: Sniper A. Nusupbaev, 8th Panfilov Rifle Division, December 1942. Central State Archive of Film, Photos, and Sound Recordings of the Republic of Kazakhstan (TsGAKZRK), 2-69291.

When it came to discrimination against Kazakhs and other non-Slavic soldiers at the hands of Red Army officers, the episode described by Bekenov was only the beginning.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

According to several NKVD reports, some officers demonstrated shocking cruelty towards non-Slavic recruits as well as a complete lack of tactical sense by intentionally flinging them into engagements where they sustained very heavy casualties. A secret special investigatory report sent by the NKVD to the Main Political Section of the Red Army (PURKKA) in the spring of 1942 indicated that these practices were widespread.¹³⁰ According to this report, many regimental commanders on the Southern Front were manifesting “scornful attitudes and criminal indifference” towards newly arrived North Caucasian and Central Asian soldiers. For example, during the period of investigation 300 Transcaucasian and Central Asian troops arrived to reinforce the 188th Cavalry Regiment of the 60th Cavalry Division. Upon seeing these soldiers, a commander named Ol’shanskii allegedly stated that “Cossack and Russian” lives were more valuable than the lives of these “Easterners.” Ol’Shanskii allegedly hatched a cruel plan to allow the Wehrmacht to eviscerate these non-Russian reinforcements so that his regiment could return to the rear and receive Slavic reinforcements. Ol’shanskii subsequently rushed these unprepared Central Asian and North Caucasian soldiers into combat and they sustained a large number of casualties. This report also claimed that Ol’shanskii deployed a Cossack mine-laying unit behind the non-Slavic reinforcements and illegally ordered these Cossacks to shoot every Caucasian and Central Asian soldier who retreated.¹³¹

When assessing the validity of this report, it must be kept in mind that NKVD officers had a stake in exaggerating episodes of ethnic antagonism within the ranks to justify their right to

¹³⁰ RGASPI (Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History), f. 17 (Central Committee of the all-Union Communist Party), o. 125, d. 85, l. 64-65. The Special Section of the Southern Front arrested Ol’Shanskii for these crimes, but this report does not indicate how he was punished.

¹³¹ Roger Reese convincingly argues that Western historians have inaccurately described Soviet blocking detachments. The main function of these detachments was not execute fleeing soldiers, but rather to return shirkers and stragglers to the frontlines. Reese, *Why Stalin’s Soldiers Fought*, 163-164. This fact makes Ol’Shanskii’s action all the more criminal, since it was not a standard Red Army practice in any respect.

monitor military operations. That said, there is a great deal of corroborating evidence indicating that the kinds of abuses perpetrated by Ol'Shanskii were commonplace on the frontlines. For example, a wartime instructional brochure written by the Kazakh political officer Särsen Amanzholov for the benefit of frontline commissars indicated that Red Army officers commonly forced non-Slavic troops to charge the field knowing full well that they would sustain heavy casualties.¹³² These wanton abuses demonstrated that the prejudicial attitudes of mid-level Slavic officers towards non-Slavic soldiers could have tragically lethal consequences. These incidences, however, were not manifestations of an official, institutionalized prejudice against Kazakhs and other non-Slavs. After all, Communist Party and NKVD authorities treated abuses like the ones committed by Ol'shanskii as serious crimes that weakened the effectiveness of the Red Army and undermined the ideal of national equality within the ranks.

At the same time, top-secret correspondence between high-level Party officials indicate that these authorities considered non-Slavs especially likely to flee the battlefield or defect to the enemy. This attitude was pervasive enough for the Nazis to capitalize on it. For example, during the Battle of Stalingrad in 1942-1943, German troops taunted their Soviet enemies by superciliously offering to trade Uzbek soldiers for “disloyal” Romanian personnel.¹³³ According to one Harvard Interview respondent who fought in the battles of Sevastopol and Stalingrad, Red Army commanders frequently expressed frustration at the refusal of “national minorities” [*natsmeny*] to fight, and these officers were quick to punish Kazakh, Tajik, Uzbek, and Armenian soldiers for “cowardice” by putting them before a firing squad.¹³⁴ This interviewee maintained

¹³² See Amanzholov, *Opyt politiko-vospitatel'noi raboty v deistvuiushchei armii*, 18.

¹³³ Vasily Grossman, *A Writer at War: Vasily Grossman with the Red Army, 1941-1945* (New York, 2005), 62.

¹³⁴ Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule B, Vol. 9, Case 641, 1-3. This subject did not specify his nationality.

that Red Army officers only rarely executed Russian soldiers in this manner. The leaders of the Red Army officially proscribed discrimination against non-Russians soldiers, but apparently, many mid-level officers did not trust these soldiers and feared that they posed a direct threat to operational security.

The perception that non-Slavic troops were disloyal was common in very senior circles as well. A July 1942 report from Senior Battalion Commissar Leonov, a senior PURKKA official, to the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party highlighted the extent of this fear.¹³⁵ According to Leonov, three categories of soldiers were defecting to the enemy in large numbers across the frontlines: soldiers whose families were living under Nazi occupation, soldiers who had escaped enemy encirclement and imprisonment and later reentered the army, and non-Russian conscripts from the Transcaucasus and Central Asia. In the case of the Primorsky Army, 79.8% of these “traitors to the Motherland” consisted of non-Russians – Azerbaijanis, Georgians, Lezgins, Armenians, Ukrainians, and representatives of other unspecified nationalities.¹³⁶ Leonov also indicated that some non-Russians inside this army were engaging in clandestine “counterrevolutionary activities” and intelligence gathering on behalf of the enemy. One of these supposed groups was located inside the 345th Rifle Division and was led by a cook named Nikitin. For an extended period, Nikitin had allegedly gathered tactical information for the Nazis and recruited defectors. Leonov’s report indicated that by the time the Red Army’s Special Section liquidated this cabal, it consisted of fifty people, the majority of whom were “partially literate” soldiers. Leonov also reported that Party investigators had uncovered another

¹³⁵ “Spravka o faktakh izmeny rodine v chastiakh deistvuushchei Krasnoi Armii,” July 15, 1942. RGASPI f. 17, o. 6, d. 85, l. 58-59.

¹³⁶ Leonov’s report does not indicate the Primorsky Army’s position on the frontlines.

“counterrevolutionary group” inside the 287th Rifle Regiment of this division comprised of non-Russian soldiers who were inciting “political instability” and encouraging defections.



Figure 7: Gun layer A. Selivanov and loader Almagambetov from the 8th Panfilov Rifle Division preparing to fire, Kalinin Front, 1943. TsGAKZRK, 2-69300. Soviet wartime photographers often attempted to capture soldiers of different nationalities fighting side by side. This was a tactic designed to emphasize the multinational “friendship of peoples” inside the Red Army.

The Russian historian Timofei Dmitrov highlights several reasons why non-Slavic soldiers may have been so prone to defect to the enemy. In his view, the principal factors were a poor knowledge of the Russian language, “social and psychological differences” between Caucasian and Central Asian soldiers on the one hand and Slavic soldiers on the other, incomprehension of broader Soviet military objectives, and the belief that the Nazis did not pose a threat to the Caucasus and Central Asia.¹³⁷ Soviet Communist Party reports support the contention that frontline linguistic barriers were an important prerequisite for defections and other serious breaches of discipline. Another report sent by Leonov to the Central

¹³⁷ Dmitrov, “Ne voz’mu nikogo, krome russkikh, ukrainsev i belorusov”.

Committee of the Soviet Communist Party in June 1942 indicated that non-Russians on the Southwestern Front with poor Russian-language skills were the soldiers most likely to cause self-inflicted wounds in order to avoid combat duty.¹³⁸ Of the 150 soldiers arrested in the 76th, 81st, and 226th Rifle Divisions, as well as the 13th Mountain Rifle Division, for causing self-inflicted wounds, 110 were Kazakhs, Azerbaijanis, Georgians, and “other non-Russians”. Out of the 38 soldiers arrested for this crime in the 38th Rifle Division, 17 were Kazakhs.¹³⁹ Leonov noted that most of these acts of self-mutilation occurred during a period of particularly intense combat in May 1942, but according to him, the major cause of this epidemic was insufficient political work among non-Russian soldiers, especially among those who did not know Russian and were unaware of the harsh penalty for self-inflicted wounds.¹⁴⁰

In Leonov’s view, non-Russians were defecting and engaging in illicit practices such as self-mutilation because they lacked a fully formed “Soviet consciousness.”¹⁴¹ From this perspective, the “traitorous” activities of these non-Russian soldiers did not stem from any kind of innate cultural or social proclivity – they were the predictable result of illiteracy, a lack of Russian-language knowledge, and insufficient exposure to Soviet propaganda. Leonov’s point of view conformed to the basic ideological position of the Communist Party towards non-Russian nationalities during the late 1920s and 1930s. During this decade, Party leaders were

¹³⁸ “Vypiska iz doneseniia iugo-zapadnogo fronta,” June 21, 1942. RGASPI f. 17, o. 6, d. 85, l., 66-67.

¹³⁹ The belief that non-Slavic soldiers were particularly prone to self-mutilation persists to this day. For example, the veteran of the 234th Rifle Division Vladimir Zhukov recalls that although the Kazakhs in his unit were fine soldiers, the Uzbek soldiers commonly stuck their hands out of their trenches to receive a debilitating wound from a German marksman. “Zhukov Vladimir Maksimovich,” *Ia pomnu*, http://iremember.ru/memoirs/pekhotintsi/zhukov-vladimir-maksimovich/?sphrase_id=9726. Accessed March 14, 2015.

¹⁴⁰ On paper, the punishment for self-inflicted wounds was execution. In practice, sympathetic medical inspectors often falsified the results of their examinations in order to spare Soviet soldiers. Reese, *Why Stalin’s Soldiers Fought*, 238-239.

¹⁴¹ RGASPI f. 17, o. 6, d. 85, l., 66-67.

quick to classify nationalities such as the Kazakhs as “backward,” but they treated “backwardness” as a temporary developmental stage through which these peoples would pass as long as Party and government authorities provided the necessary economic, cultural, and ideological conditions for advancement.¹⁴² During the war, the dominant opinion inside the NKO, Soviet Communist Party, and Red Army officer corps was that most Kazakhs and other non-Russians had yet to achieve the requisite level of development to be loyal Red Army soldiers.

The perception that non-Slavic soldiers were developmentally backward almost certainly informed the NKO’s October 1943 decision to “excuse” [*osvobodit*] all “local nationalities” from the Caucasus and Central Asia from serving in frontline units.¹⁴³ During the remainder of the war, the NKO shunted all new Caucasian and Central Asian conscripts into labor units in a repeat of the policies it pursued from June to December 1941. Kazakhs already fighting on the frontlines continued to serve in their units until the end of the war, but the NKO had made its preference for Slavic soldiers clear. Overall, the conscription of Kazakhs and other non-Slavs into the Red Army was a contingent and desperate measure designed to forestall a military collapse during 1941 and 1942 – a period when the Red Army sustained particularly high casualties. Once the military situation stabilized in 1943 and new Slavic conscripts became available in western Soviet regions liberated by the Red Army, the NKO blocked the flow of Kazakhs and other non-Slavs to the frontlines.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² The historian Francine Hirsch refers to this process as “state sponsored evolutionism.” Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*. See also Yuri Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North* (Ithaca, 1994), 187-299.

¹⁴³ The Main Administration for the Formation and Manning of Red Army Troops (Glavupraform) issued this directive. A. U. Bezugol’nyi et al., *Gorsy Severnogo Kavkaza v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine, 1941-1945 gg.: problemy istorii, istoriografii i istochnikovedeniia* (Moscow, 2012), 155, 157. By the end of 1943, the NKO had excused 43 “indigenous” Soviet nationalities from conscription. *Ibid.*, 165.



Figure 8: Soldiers from Kazakhstan calculating anti-tank fire, Kalinin Front, 1943. TsGARKZRP, 2-10230.

Conclusion

NKO conscription policies during the Great Patriotic War contributed to the solidification of an unofficial but real national hierarchy in Kazakhstan and the Soviet Union as a whole. From June 22 to December 1941, the NKO officially blocked Central Asians, members of diaspora nationalities, and Soviet citizens from recently annexed territories from serving on the frontlines. In December 1941, the desperate personnel needs of the Red Army prompted the NKO to lift its prohibition against Central Asians serving in frontline units, but Moldavians, Western Belarusians, Western Ukrainians and other recently annexed populations continued to be excluded until 1944. With these mobilization policies, the NKO was suggesting that recently annexed and diaspora populations were disloyal, but Kazakhs and other Central Asians were trustworthy enough to bear arms in defense of the Soviet Union. The NKO, however, reversed itself in October 1943 when it once again forbade the conscription of non-Slavs. From June

¹⁴⁴ Sinitsyn, *Za russkii narod!* 90. See also Blauvelt, “Military Mobilisation and National Identity in the Soviet Union”.

1941 to May 1945, the NKO only opened a few windows for the integration of Kazakhs into the Red Army, which suggested that the conscription of Kazakhs and other non-Slavs had more to do with the short-term manpower needs of the Red Army than with long-term ideological goals.

Ideological factors, however, did significantly influence the Soviet Communist Party's treatment of non-Slavic troops. The intermediary position of the Kazakhs in the Soviet hierarchy of loyalty meant that in the eyes of Red Army and Party officials, Kazakh soldiers were not the equals of Slavic troops, but these officials did expect the Kazakhs to someday become the equals of Slavs. According to some Party representatives, this process had already begun in 1945. For example, in 1945 Särsen Amanzholov wrote an instructional essay for Party agitators describing his experiences with political education among non-Russian soldiers on the frontlines.¹⁴⁵

Amanzholov writes that during the Soviet winter offensive of 1945, it was common for Red Army officers to attach new Moldavian recruits to experienced Kazakh and Uzbek soldiers.¹⁴⁶ According to Amanzholov, these Moldavians learned a great deal from their Central Asian peers and became very effective Soviet soldiers in their own right. In Amanzholov's view, these Kazakhs and Uzbeks were capable of helping these Moldavians become loyal and effective Red Army soldiers because they had become bearers of a genuine Soviet consciousness and integral participants in the Soviet war effort. The integration of the Kazakhs into the Red Army was a measure of expediency designed to forestall a Soviet defeat in the Great Patriotic War, but this mobilization had the unexpected consequence of accelerating the integration of the Kazakhs into the wider Soviet community, albeit on unequal terms with the Slavic nationalities.

¹⁴⁵ Amanzholov, *Opyt politiko-vospitatel'noi raboty v deistvuiushchei armii*, 7-62.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 40.

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In 1985, the Kazakh veteran Akhmetzhan Amanzholov penned his memoirs about his frontline experiences during World War II.¹⁴⁷ Amanzholov served as a Red Army sergeant during the Soviet Union's lighting campaign against Manchukuo in August 1945. After the Japanese forces occupying Manchukuo surrendered to the Soviets, Amanzholov and several of his fellow Russian soldiers visited the liberated city of Tsitsihar. Searching for shelter, they entered a residential home where they encountered an old Cossack who had emigrated from Russia shortly after the Bolshevik Revolution. According to Amanzholov, the Cossack was incredulous when he saw him, claiming that it was impossible for a Kazakh to be an officer since the Kazakhs were "aliens [*inorodtsy*] and lesser [*unter*]." ¹⁴⁸ Amanzholov recalls that his Russian comrades laughed at this "ridiculous statement" and they explained to the old Cossack that these terms were defunct in the Soviet Union and that Amanzholov was a fine example of a Red Army officer and Communist Party member.

Amanzholov's comrades were certainly exaggerating the extent to which national equality reigned inside the Red Army, but their response to this Cossack is telling nonetheless. For these Russian soldiers, it was axiomatic that a Kazakh could be a Red Army officer and Party member. The opinion of these soldiers reflected NKO and Soviet Communist Party mobilizational policies predicated on the belief that Kazakhs and other "loyal" national groups could become full-fledged members of the Soviet community. The Communist Party actively attempted to persuade Kazakh soldiers that it sought to integrate them into this community, and

¹⁴⁷ "Vospominaniia uchastnika voiny s militaristskoi Iaponiei s 9 avgusta po 3 sentiabria 1945 goda, veteran voiny Amanzholov, A. U." *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, vol. 1: (2009), 57-67.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 65-65.

as the next chapter demonstrates, propaganda was one of its favorite mediums for pursuing this objective.

Chapter 2 - History and Hero Making: Patriotic Narratives and the Sovietization of Kazakh Frontline Propaganda

Mobilizing the Kazakhs for service in the Great Patriotic War involved much more than putting weapons into their hands and marching them into battle. Frontline service was an intensely ideological experience, and the Soviet Communist Party used the war as an opportunity to change the worldview and even culture of Kazakh soldiers. Party and military leaders believed that the Kazakhs had to become literate, fluent in Russian, and imbued with “Soviet patriotism” in order to function effectively on the battlefield. During the war, the Main Political Administration of the Red Army (PURKKA) assumed much of the responsibility for instilling these traits and turning the Kazakhs into ideal Soviet soldiers. PURKKA’s main tools for accomplishing this formidable objective were agitprop and educational instruction.¹

Chapter One argued that Soviet leaders conscripted the Kazakhs in a fitful and reluctant manner because NKO and military officials considered Central Asians to be developmentally backward. This perspective influenced PURKKA’s propaganda policies, but in general, PURKKA officials demonstrated a more inclusive attitude towards Kazakhs and other non-Slavs compared to the NKO. During the war, PURKKA never stopped trying to convince Kazakh soldiers that they were integral participants in the war effort and full-fledged members of the Soviet community of nations. When it came to integrating non-Slavic soldiers into the greater Soviet community, far more was possible in the realm of propaganda than in frontline trenches. At the same time, this chapter will demonstrate that frontline conditions made it difficult for

¹ The Bolsheviks never clearly distinguished between propaganda and education. For Soviet leaders propaganda was simply a means of disseminating the worldview of the Communist Party, which these leaders assumed was inherently correct and based in fact. See Peter Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917-1929* (New York, 1985).

PURKKA to conduct propaganda work among Kazakhs at the level demanded by their superiors in Moscow. Western historians have focused intensively on these failures and have been generally dismissive of the party's propaganda campaign among non-Russians during the Great Patriotic War. Roger Reese, for example, claims that the Communist Party emphasized propaganda work among Slavic troops to such an extent that agitprop among non-Slavs was little more than an "afterthought."² I argue that the organizational problems and ideological contradictions besetting propaganda work among Kazakh soldiers did not stem from the indifference of Communist Party officials as Reese maintains. These shortcomings were the result of a tension between the goals of instilling loyalty to the multinational Soviet Union while simultaneously preserving the identity of Kazakh soldiers as a distinct national group within the Red Army.

Several historians have argued that the Soviet party-state attempted to foster a dual-identity among non-Russian groups during the 1920s and 1930s that was simultaneously Soviet and national.³ These scholars maintain that officials and non-elite citizens in the non-Russian regions often framed their Soviet and national identities in mutually constitutive terms. In this formulation, there was no contradiction between Soviet citizenship and membership in a defined national community, and there was no tension between striving for an internationalist socialist future while simultaneously promoting national traditions containing a suitably "socialist" content.

² Reese, *Why Stalin's Soldiers Fought*, 198-199. Karel C. Berkhoff similarly maintains that Stalin paid relatively little attention to propaganda among non-Slavic nationalities during the war. See his *Motherland in Danger: Soviet Propaganda during World War II* (Cambridge MA, 2012), 216-222.

³ See Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," Adeeb Khalid, "Nationalizing the Revolution in Central Asia: The Transformation of Jadidism, 1917-1920," in Suny, *State of Nations*, 145-162; Serhy Yekelchuk, "Stalinist Patriotism as Imperial Discourse: Reconciling the Ukrainian and Russian 'Heroic Past,' 1939-1945," *Kritika*, vol. 3 (1): (Winter 2002), 51-80; Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*; Ali İğmen, *Speaking Soviet with an Accent: Culture and Power in Kyrgyzstan* (Pittsburgh, 2012).

The goal of nurturing a complementary Soviet-Kazakh identity crucially informed propaganda efforts among Kazakh soldiers after the German invasion of June 1941. Adhering to “Leninist-Stalinist nationality policies,” agitprop workers endeavored to “instruct” Kazakh soldiers in their native language and tailored their propaganda to accord with Kazakh “national traditions.”⁴ The goal of these efforts was to encourage “Soviet patriotism,” but the definition of Soviet patriotism remained in flux from 1941 to 1945. During the war, a tension did in fact emerge between the goals of fostering a universal Soviet identity among Kazakh troops while encouraging these soldiers to think of themselves as a distinct Soviet national group. PURKKA officials resolved this tension by marginalizing propaganda themes that they believed contradicted the Soviet patriotic line. As the war progressed, PURKKA’s agitprop workers increasingly associated Kazakh national distinctiveness with service in the Great Patriotic War. This narrative shift served as ideological justification for the NKO’s decision to reorganize the Red Army into an all-Union force blind to national differences and it became an important component of the wartime effort to “Sovietize” Kazakh identity.

The Administrative and Logistical Dimensions of Agitprop Work among Frontline Kazakhs

The Communist Party ordered the formation of PURKKA in 1929, from which time it operated as an independent section of the Party’s Central Committee. The Party leadership tasked PURKKA with spreading its communist ideology to Red Army personnel through printed

⁴ For an articulation of this view, see “Direktiva GLAVPU RKKA [Shcherbakova] nachal’nikam politupravlenii frontov, okrugov o vospitatel’noi rabote s krasnoarmeitsami i mladshimi komandirami nerusskoi natsional’nosti,” September 17, 1942, Central Archive of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation (TsAMO) f. 32 (Main Political Administration of the Red Army), o. 795436, d. 6, l. 129-130 in Zolotarev, *Russkii arkhiv*, 17 (6): 173-174.

propaganda and oral agitation.⁵ Aleksandr Shcherbakov, the head of PURKKA from June 1942 to May 1945, oversaw a vast network of political sections embedded in all armies, corps, divisions, and brigades.⁶ These political sections coordinated the propaganda efforts of a vast army of commissars and political workers. The Agitprop Section of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in Moscow, headed during the war by Georgii Aleksandrov, held ultimate oversight over the production of propaganda materials in all Soviet regions, but PURKKA officials often worked with the Agitprop Sections of local Communist Parties to disseminate propaganda materials in the native languages of non-Russian troops.

Throughout the war, Shcherbakov consistently enjoined PURKKA to improve the quality of political work among non-Russian soldiers. Yet, from 1941 to 1945, frontline political sections in units with Kazakh soldiers often lacked the supplies and personnel needed to conduct effective agitprop work. These logistical and personnel problems stemmed in significant measure from PURKKA's insistence on simultaneously focusing on political education among Soviet soldiers in general and non-Russian troops in particular. Despite the fact that Shcherbakov portrayed these two assignments as fully compatible, PURKKA never succeeded in reconciling the propaganda requirements of the broad Red Army masses with the particular needs of Kazakh troops. Throughout the war, the administrative structure and practices of PURKKA reflected the predominately Slavic composition of the Red Army. Unaccustomed to dealing with so many non-Slavs, it proved difficult for PURKKA workers to customize their

⁵ Zolotarev, *Russkii arkhiv*, 17 (6), 8.

⁶ For an elaboration of the administrative structure of PURKKA and its interactions with military authorities during the war, see N. V. Pupyshv, *V pamiati i v serdtse* (Moscow, 1986), 12-18. Shcherbakov also directed the Sovinformburo during the war.

agitprop for the benefit of the Kazakh and many other non-Russian groups fighting in the Red Army.

During the war, PURKKA focused on periodicals as its primary source of agitation material and “the most important base for political work” among frontline soldiers.⁷ This focus was utilitarian in nature - whereas an agitator-lecturer could only address several hundred soldiers at one time, soldiers could pass newspapers from hand to hand and these publications could potentially reach “thousands and tens of thousands of soldiers and commanders.”⁸

Shcherbakov enthusiastically promoted the production of Kazakh-language newspapers and leaflets, many of which were direct translations of Russian propaganda materials.⁹ Whether soldiers read these materials themselves or agitators read these publications to them, these publications became the raw materials out of which the Communist Party attempted to fashion a patriotic narrative for frontline Kazakhs.¹⁰ From November 1942 to the end of the war, PURKKA oversaw the publication of 16 Kazakh-language frontline newspapers and 2 frontline

⁷ “Postanovlenie TsK VKP(b) ‘O reorganizatsii struktury partiinykh i komsomol’skikh organizatsii v Krasnoi armii i usilenii roli frontovykh, armeiskikh i divizionnykh gazet,” May 24, 1943 in K. U. Chernenko, *KPSS o vooruzhennykh silakh Sovetskogo soiuz: dokumenty, 1917-1968* (Moscow, 1969), 323-324. PURKKA made no clear distinction between frontline and non-frontline newspapers. In practice, PURKKA considered any newspaper disseminated to soldiers at the front to be “frontline”.

⁸ “Direktiva GLAVPU RKKA chlenam voennykh sovetov i nachal’nikam politupravlenii frontov, okrugov ob uluchshenii rukovodstva frontovymi, armeiskimi i divizionnymi gazetami, June 26, 1942, TsAMO f. 32, o. 795436, d. 8, l. 67 in Zolotarev, *Russkii arkhiv*, 17 (6): 224-226. Editors working in the military section of the Sovinformburo provided all military-related materials for newspapers, journals, and the radio.

⁹ In April 1944, Shcherbakov instructed frontline newspaper editors to translate articles from Russian-language periodicals and to produce original articles written in non-Russian languages. See “Direktiva GLAVPU RKKA nachal’nikam politupravlenii frontov i okrugov ob uluchshenii ideino-politicheskogo sodержaniia gazet, izdaiushchikhsia na iazykakh narodov SSSR, April 4, 1944, TsAMO f. 32, o. 920265, d. 8, l. 42-43 in Zolotarev, *Russkii arkhiv*, 17 (6): 266-267.

¹⁰ PURKKA instructed divisional political sections to deploy report-givers to every unit in order to conduct political propaganda - as many as 14 to every regiment. See “Iz politdoneseniia politotdela 310-i strelkovoi divizii ob ispol’zovanii khudozhestvennoi literatury v agitatsionno-propagandistkoi rabote,” January 14, 1943 in Pokrovskii, *Kazakhstan v period Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny Sovetskogo souza* (Alma-Ata, 1964) vol. 1, 219-220.

Kazakh journals, along with a Kazakh-language version of *The Agitator's Notebook* [*Bloknot agitatora*] – the journal produced for the benefit of frontline political workers.¹¹ In addition, during the war the Central Committee of the Kazakh Communist Party sent 5-10% of the print-runs of the republican newspapers *Sotsialistiĭk Qazaqstan* and *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda* to Red Army units containing Kazakhs, along with local newspapers and other publications written in Kazakh.¹² PURKKA supplemented these written materials with lectures and meetings held under the auspices of political workers.

In the fall of 1942, PURKKA sent inspectors to several fronts to assess the effectiveness of political work among non-Russian soldiers. The results of these investigations were far from encouraging.¹³ The subsequent decree issued by Shcherbakov indicated that frontline political workers were neglecting the propaganda needs of non-Russian soldiers in general and Transcaucasian and Central Asian personnel in particular.¹⁴ In his directive, Shcherbakov criticized frontline political workers for mechanically employing the same propaganda techniques they used vis-à-vis Russians, an approach that ignored the distinctive “native

¹¹ Between 1941 and 1945, PURKKA and the NKO published 110 frontline newspapers written in non-Russian languages. See Sagymbai Kozybaev, *Opalennaia voinoi: kazakhskaia frontovaia pechat'* (Almaty, 2010), 13-17. The editors of the *Gazette of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR* also published books, brochures, leaflets and instructional posters for Red Army soldiers. From September 1942 to September 1943, these editors published 523 titles in non-Russian languages, 50 of which were in Kazakh. See “Spravka o rabote redaktsii ‘Vedomostei Verkhovnogo soveta SSSR, po izdaniu literatury dlia Krasnoi armii na iazykakh narodov SSSR za period s sentiabria 1942 g. po sentiabr’ 1943 g.” in L. S. Gatagova et. al, *TsK KP(b) i natsional’nyi vopros* (Moscow, 2009) vol. 2, 770-771.

¹² “Zapiska nachal’nika upravleniia agitatsii i propagandy PURKKA I. V. Shikina sekretaru TsK VKP(b) A. S. Shcherbakovu o vospitatel’noi rabote sredi krasnoarmeitsev i mladshikh komandirov nerusskoi natsional’nosti, September 28, 1942, RGASPI f. 17 (Central Committee of the all-Union Communist Party), o. 125, d. 85, l. 69, in *Ibid.* 692-693. During the first two years of the war state publishers in Kazakhstan produced over 2 million copies of 343 Kazakh-language books and brochures that PURKKA sent to frontline units. See Belan, *Na vsekh frontakh*, 158.

¹³ Pupyshev, *V Pamiati i v serdtse*, 77.

¹⁴ Zolotarev, *Russkii arkhiv* 17 (6): 173-174. By “structures of national life”, Shcherbakov most likely had in mind the economic and social particularities of these nationalities. This directive noted that particularly large concentrations of non-Russian soldiers were fighting on the Stalingrad and North-Caucasian Fronts.

languages, customs, and structures of national life” of Kazakh and other non-Russian troops. The decree specified several measures designed to eliminate these shortcomings, most of which were little more than reminders to pay more attention to agitprop among non-Russians.



Figure 9: Soldiers of the 8th Guards Panfilov Rifle Division undergoing political instruction. Communist Party officials intended for political agitation to be a permanent fixture of life for soldiers of all nationalities. (1943) TsGAKZRK 2-69298

Shcherbakov expected frontline agitators to take a differentiated approach to non-Russian troops, but this goal proved difficult to implement because PURKKA did not consider national differences when it organized the bureaucracy that conducted propaganda work. This does not mean, however, that PURKKA failed completely to implement special measures designed to

improve propaganda work among national minorities in uniform. By the end of 1942, PURKKA had deployed approximately 1,000 Central Asian and Transcaucasian political workers to the front who were capable of conversing in non-Russian languages, and the Political Administration was providing political training to an additional 1,500 Georgian, Armenian, Azerbaijani, Kazakh, Uzbek, Turkmen, and Kyrgyz agitators.¹⁵ These numbers were significant, but there is a great deal of evidence indicating that they were insufficient given the hundreds of thousands of non-Russians in the Red Army by the beginning of 1943. A report written in October 1943 by Särsen Amanzholov, a senior director of political work among non-Russian soldiers and a concerted opponent of “nationalist” deviations in the Kazakh philological and historical establishments during the late 1930s, indicated that PURKKA had failed to assign a single agitator capable of conversing with non-Russian troops to a division on the Karelian Front.¹⁶ Seven out of sixteen agitators embedded inside another division fighting along this front had no actual experience with agitation, and two only spoke Slavic languages. PURKKA often had so few workers at its disposal that it could only assign a single agitator to a regiment to propagandize among non-Russians. In the case of units strongly mixed by nationality, these political workers often had no

¹⁵ Puypshev, *V pamiate i v serdtse*, 79.

¹⁶ Amanzholov, *Opyt politiko-vospitatel'noi raboty v deistvuiushchei armii*, 92-93. Before joining the Red Army, Amanzholov was a prominent ethnographer and philologist in Kazakhstan. In May 1944 Amanzholov stridently criticized ‘national-fascists’ in Kazakhstan who were supposedly trying to drive a wedge between the Kazakh and Russian peoples by opposing the Cyrilization of the Kazakh language and the introduction of Soviet and Russian words into the Kazakh lexicon. The subsequent investigation launched by the Communist Party’s Central Committee revealed that Amanzholov exaggerated several of his criticisms. See “Pis'mo redaktora-perevodchika Upravleniia agitatsii i propagandy GlavPURKKA S. Amanzholova nachal'niku Upravleniia propagandy i agitatsii TsK VKP (b) G. F. Aleksandrovu o nedostatkakh v dele perevoda politicheskoi literatury s russkogo na Kazakhskii iazyk,” May 20, 1944, in Gatagova, *TsK VKP(b) i natsional'nyi vopros*, vol. 2, 824-828; “Dokladnaia zapiska zaveduiushchego otdelom propgrupp Upravleniia propagandy i agitatsii TsK VKP (b) N. N. Danilova sekretariu TsK VKP (b) G. M. Malenkovu o proverke faktov, ukazannykh v pis'me S. Amanzholova,” No later than September 6, 1944, in *ibid*, 853-860. For an overview of Amanzholov’s academic and military career, see “Amanzholov, Särsen,” in Ä. Nysanbaev, *Qazaqstan: ülttyq entsiklopediia* (Almaty, 2007) vol. 1, 336.

choice but to conduct their work in the most commonly spoken language of the unit, making it inevitable that many soldiers would not understand them.¹⁷

Many problems related to agitprop among non-Russian soldiers stemmed from a less than clear understanding of the national composition of the Red Army. As late as April 1944, the PURKKA leadership had no comprehensive data on the exact number of non-Russian soldiers and sergeants serving in the Red Army, and for this reason, agitprop workers could only guess how many newspapers, leaflets, and other propaganda materials to print in non-Russian languages.¹⁸ Due to ignorance about the many peoples that populated the Soviet Union, PURKKA sometimes assigned agitators to frontline units based on spurious linguistic commonalities. For example, according to Amanzholov, PURKKA officials sometimes assumed that all Caucasians could understand Armenian and Georgian or that all Turkic speakers could interact in Tatar or Kazakh. These confused political officers often assigned linguistically mismatched agitators who could not communicate with the soldiers under their charges.¹⁹ In one of his essays written to help agitators improve their propaganda work among non-Russian soldiers, Amanzholov criticized frontline propagandists for their tendency to read lectures in a random language they knew would be incomprehensible to their audience. In Amanzholov's

¹⁷ Amanzholov, *Opyt politiko-vospitatel'noi raboty v deistvuiushchei armii*, 12.

¹⁸ An April 1944 communiqué indicates PURKKA's lack of awareness of the national composition of the Red Army. In this communiqué, Shcherbakov instructed PURKKA to determine the exact number of non-Russian soldiers and sergeants serving in the ranks. See Zolotarev, *Russkii arkhiv* 17 (6): 266-267.

¹⁹ Ibid, 23. It would seem, however, that some Red Army personnel who spoke different Turkic languages could communicate with each other. For example, Mansur Abdulin in his capacity as his unit's Young Communist League functionary (*komsorg*) translated Tatar, Kazakh, Uzbek, Bashkir, and Kyrgyz documents and letters into Russian for the benefit of his fellow soldiers. See Mansur Abdulin, *Red Road from Stalingrad: Recollections of a Soviet Infantryman* (South Yorkshire, 2004), 110. In a similar case, the Kyrgyz veteran Tunguchbai Apasov, who served in the famed 316th Panfilov Rifle Division, states that the Kazakhs and Kyrgyz in his division "had practically no mastery" of Russian. Because Apasov studied Russian before the war and was a *komsorg*, he acted as translator for his commanders. "Apasov" Tunguchbai, *Ia pomniu*, http://iremember.ru/memoirs/pekhotintsi/apasov-tunguchbay/?sphrase_id=9726. Last accessed March 14, 2015.

view, such a “formalistic” approach to agitation and instruction prevented soldiers from imbibing the message of the Communist Party as well as critical battlefield information.²⁰

Even when frontline political workers demonstrated a willingness to propagandize among Kazakhs and other non-Russians, shortages of newspapers and other printed materials often hampered their efforts. This problem was partially rooted in the centralized nature of the PURKKA propaganda network. Agitprop authorities in Almaty were obligated to forward requests for Kazakh-language newspapers and other publications to PURKKA headquarters in Moscow, where central officials considered these requests.²¹ The delays inherent in this procedure were so severe that First Secretary of the Kazakh Communist Party Nikolai Skvortsov frequently had to send telegrams to Shcherbakov requesting that PURKKA expedite the allocation of Kazakh newspapers to needy military units stationed outside Kazakhstan.²²

Frequent injunctions to print Kazakh-language propaganda materials, however, did not automatically translate into the distribution of this literature to Kazakh frontline personnel. Party and government officials in Kazakhstan often struggled to send newspapers in quantities sufficient to satisfy the requirements of PURKKA.²³ The editorial staffs of Russian frontline newspapers often made up for personnel shortages by poaching personnel assigned to non-Russian frontline papers. This practice, which occurred without the consent of PURKKA, often led to substantial publication shortfalls of Kazakh-language materials because Kazakh editorial

²⁰ Amanzholov, *Opyt politiko-vospitatel'noi raboty deistvuiushchei armii*, 33.

²¹ This procedure is elaborated in reports produced by the deputy head of the Section for Propaganda and Agitation of the Central Committee of the Kazakh Communist Party in November 1942. See APRK, f. 708, o. 6, d. 1417b, l. 10.

²² See for example APRK, f. 708, o. 6, d. 1417b, l. 9.

²³ APRK f. 708, o. 8, d. 1614a, l. 23.

staffs lost so many employees that they could not produce newspapers on time.²⁴ Even when Kazakh newspapers and leaflets reached frontline units, delays in the distribution of these propaganda materials often meant that crates full of propaganda literature languished at headquarters unread and unutilized by political workers.²⁵

Thanks to these logistical problems, political workers embedded in military units often had little or no access to Kazakh-language agitprop materials.²⁶ A characteristic report written in August 1943 by an agitator embedded in the 13,282nd unit addressed to the NKO stated that 75% of the soldiers serving in this military formation consisted of Kazakhs and Uzbeks, the majority of whom possessed absolutely no Russian-language knowledge. This political worker requested that the NKO direct PURKKA to send Kazakh- and Uzbek-language versions of Stalin's book *On the Great Patriotic War*, copies of the *History of the Kazakh SSR*, and native language newspapers to the unit posthaste in order to facilitate propaganda work.²⁷ During the war, Kazakhstan's Party organs received similar appeals from agitprop workers stationed throughout the Soviet Union, from Ukraine to the Pacific Ocean Fleet.²⁸ The sheer number of requests for

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ "Spravka nachal'nika otdela agitatsii Upravleniia agitatsii i propagandy PURKKA Rubinshteina nachal'niku Glavnogo politicheskogo upravleniia Krasnoi armii A. S. Shcherbakovu o politicheskoi rabote s krasnoarmeitsami i mladshimi komandirami nerusskikh natsional'nostei," August 5, 1943, RGASPI f. 88 (personal collection of A. S. Shcherbakov), o. 1, d. 964, l. 2 in Gatagova, *TsK VKP(b) i natsional'nyi vopros*, vol. 2, 756-758.

²⁶ See "Stenogramma vystupleniia nachal'nika Glavnogo politicheskogo upravleniia Krasnoi armii A. S. Shcherbakova na soveshchaniu agitatorov sredi boitsov nerusskikh natsional'nostei, August 5, 1943, RGASPI f. 88 (Shcherbakov Aleksandr Sergeevich, 1901-1945), o. 1, d. 957, l. 1-15, in Gatagova, *TsK i natsional'nyi vopros*, vol. 2, 762.

²⁷ APRK f. 708, o. 6/1, d. 564, l. 98. The only other identifying information provided by this document is that this agitator was a captain.

²⁸ For examples of these requests see APRK, f. 708, o. 6, d. 1418a, l. 39; APRK f. 708, o. 6, d. 1417b, l. 21; APRK, f. 708, o. 6, d. 1420, l. 174; APRK f. 708, o. 8, d. 1614a, l. 24; APRK f. 708, o. 5/1, d. 553, l. 54. This need for propaganda materials was not unique to military units. In December 1942 a commissar embedded in an NKVD border guards unit, 20% of which was comprised of Kazakhs, sent a request to the secretary of the Kazakh Communist Party for Kazakh-language publications as well as Russian-language materials describing the way of

Kazakh-language materials during the war indicates that shortages of these materials was an endemic problem for PURKKA agitators.

Political workers attached to frontline units often resolved the distribution problem by circumventing the agitprop pipeline and printing Kazakh-language newspapers directly at the front.²⁹ As early as December 1942 the political section of the Stalingrad Front began printing a Kazakh-language version of the frontline paper *Banner of Stalin (Stalin tuy)* as well as flyers written in Kazakh.³⁰ This project required the participation of “qualified workers,” i.e. propagandists who knew Kazakh, as well as large quantities of typographic equipment capable of printing in the new Kazakh Cyrillic alphabet.³¹ The need for these workers and equipment became so acute that Deputy Head of the Political Administration of the Stalingrad Front E. Kashev petitioned Skvortsov to send workers and printing materials to Stalingrad by plane in order to facilitate the continued production of this literature.

As the war continued, Shcherbakov and the rest of the PURKKA leadership in Moscow struggled more and more to adapt Kazakh-language agitprop to frontline conditions, forcing Kazakh agitators to develop their own methods for spreading the Party’s message. The efforts of frontline political workers to propagandize among Kazakh and other non-Slavic soldiers were often innovative, but these efforts could not fully compensate for the logistical difficulties that

life, economic, and political characteristics of the Kazakh people. See APRK f. 708, o. 6, d. 1417b, l. 39. For a similar request issued by the political section of a border guards unit stationed on Sakhalin Island, see APRK, f. 708, o. 6, d. 1417b, l. 54.

²⁹ There was precedent for this practice during the Russian Civil War, when Bolshevik officials sent agitational trains containing presses for printing newspapers and leaflets to areas well outside the capitals. See Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State*, 60.

³⁰ APRK, f. 708, o. 6, d. 1417b, l. 12. For an analogous request from an editor of the frontline newspaper *Otan ushin* stationed at the Northwestern Front, see APRK f. 708, o. 6/1, d. 1417b, l. 4.

³¹ Soviet authorities introduced the Cyrillic Kazakh alphabet in 1940. For problems with the acquisition of typesetting equipment in this new alphabet among frontline propagandists, see APRK f. 708, o. 6, d. 1417b, l. 18, December 20, 1943.

emerged thanks to the overly centralized nature of the PURKKA bureaucracy. As the war ended in the spring of 1945, PURKKA increasingly focused its propaganda efforts on Russian soldiers rather than non-Slavic troops. In this regard, the PURKKA propaganda effort among non-Slavic soldiers was similar to NKO conscription policies towards Caucasians and Central Asians. As the war dragged on, PURKKA and the NKO became so focused on creating multinational Soviet units that they increasingly ignored the propaganda and material needs of non-Slavic soldiers.

Communist Party Political Workers and Russian-Language Instruction

The Kazakh Communist Party and the republic's Commissariat of Enlightenment strove to provide Russian-language instruction to Kazakh conscripts before they departed for the front, but achieved only limited success in this regard. In general, only Kazakhs who lived in provincial capitals during the 1930s had access to Russian-language education, and *aul* residents had virtually no exposure to the language. As a result, Kazakh conscripts often arrived on the frontlines with very little comprehension of Russian.³² In July 1942, the Kazakh soldier Mukhamet Shayakhmetov joined a company of reinforcements raised in Semei Province. According to Shayakhmetov, regimental officers transported these Kazakhs to the front after only two months of training, during which time they learned virtually no Russian. For this reason, these soldiers could not understand basic orders after their arrival in the combat zone and they struggled to fulfill their soldierly duties.³³ Mūsa Dīnīshev, a Kazakh veteran who fought in the battle of Stalingrad, notes in his memoir that most of the Kazakhs, Uzbeks, and other Central

³² For a description of this phenomenon by the Kazakh veteran Gabbas Zhumatov. See "Zhumatov Gabbas Zhumatovich," *Ia pomniu*, http://iremember.ru/memoirs/artilleristi/zhulmatov-gabbis-zhurmatovich/?sphrase_id=9726. March 14, 2015.

³³ Shayakhmetov, *The Silent Steppe*, 273.

Asian soldiers who arrived in the city as reinforcements in September 1942 did not know Russian or only understood the language poorly.³⁴ It was PURKKA's job to ensure that these Central Asian troops acquired a basis knowledge of Russian, and this task fell on the shoulders of the political administration's political commissars and agitprop workers.

Western historians have written relatively little about political commissars inside the wartime Red Army. For the most part, these scholars have portrayed them as ruthless enforcers of military and ideological discipline.³⁵ While political commissars certainly played this role and often drew the ire of rank-and-file soldiers for reporting disciplinary violations to the Red Army's Special Section, these political workers had a variety of other functions as well.³⁶ Among the most important of these roles was providing Russian language instruction to non-Russian soldiers. Political commissars and frontline agitators faced a dilemma when dealing with soldiers who could not communicate fluently in Russian: on the one the hand, it was essential for these conscripts to learn at least basic Russian to understand commands and fulfill their military duties. On the other hand, the PURKKA leadership considered it vital to conduct mass-political and instructional work among these soldiers as quickly as possible in order to provide vital battlefield and ideological information. If Kazakh and other non-Russian troops

³⁴ Mūsa Dīnīshev, *Stalingradty qorghaghan qazaqtar* (Almaty, 1994), 44. According to other Red Army memoirists, Central Asian soldiers of other nationalities also lacked Russian-language knowledge. For example, the veteran Aleksandr Semenov recalls that many of the Uzbeks who fought with him in the 203rd Artillery-Machine Gun Battalion did not know Russian, which "made it very difficult for them". He also notes that no one bothered to teach them Russian. "Semenov Aleksandr Ivanovich," *Ia pomniu*, http://iremember.ru/memoirs/samokhodchiki/semenov-aleksandr-ivanovich/?sphrase_id=9726. Accessed March 14, 2015.

³⁵ See for example Glantz, *Colossus Reborn*, 565-566.

³⁶ Catherine Merridale provides an excellent and succinct summary of the varied roles of Red Army political instructors in *Ivan's War*, 63-65.

received instruction solely in Russian, they would master the language more quickly, but they would fail to understand the content of propaganda lectures and instructional sessions.

Frontline political workers arrived at a compromise solution to the Russian-language quandary: bi- or multilingual agitators would conduct mass-political and instructional work in the native languages of soldiers while simultaneously providing Russian-language lessons.³⁷ Beginning in 1938, Soviet language policies increasingly stressed Russian language instruction alongside native language instruction for all Soviet citizens.³⁸ Wartime necessity dovetailed with the efforts of the Soviet Communist Party and the Commissariat of Enlightenment to transform Russian into a universal Soviet language while retaining the integrity of non-Russian languages. There is no compelling evidence that PURKKA intended Russian-language instruction in the fighting Red Army to be Russificatory. The documentary record suggests instead that PURKKA's objective was to maintain the linguistic identity of Kazakh soldiers while simultaneously inducting them into the Russophone world. Kazakh political commissars and agitators, however, never portrayed the relationship between the Kazakh and Russian languages in equal terms. Frontline articles in Kazakh newspapers frequently characterized Russian as the gateway to "the leading culture of the Soviet Union" and as a tool that Kazakh soldiers could use to improve their overall "cultural level."³⁹ In this formulation, Russian and Kazakh were

³⁷ See Amanzholov, *Opyt politiko-vospitatel'noi raboty v deistvuiushchei armii*, 11.

³⁸ Stalin stated in October 1937 that the induction of large numbers of non-Russians into the Red Army necessitated the introduction of the Russian language into non-Russian schools so that future conscripts could communicate with each other. See Peter A. Blitstein, "Nation-Building or Russification? Obligatory Russian Instruction in the Soviet Non-Russian School, 1938-1953," in Suny, *A State of Nations*, 253-274. See also "Dokladnaia zapiska zamestitelia zaveduiushchego otdelom shkol TsK VKP(b) A. V. Bushueva sekretariam TsK VKP(b) A. A. Andreevu i G. M. Malenkovu ob izmenenii poriadka izucheniiia iazykov v natsional'nykh shkolakh soiuznykh respublik," January 31, 1940, RGASPI f. 17, o. 117, d. 65, l. 247 in Gatagova, *TsK VKP(b) i natsional'nyi vopros*, vol. 2, 520-521.

³⁹ See for example "Orys tilin üiren!," *Otandy qorghauda: Leningrad maidynymġ qyzyläsker gazetī*, March 25, 1944, 2. See also a directive to PURKKA on providing of Russian-language instruction to thousands of Kazakhs,

complementary languages, but Russian belonged to a higher cultural level to which all Soviet peoples should aspire.

Because PURKKA issued few concrete directives concerning Russian-language instruction, the initiative of individual political workers became an important component of this tutelage. As part of his overview of effective strategies for working with non-Russian troops, Amanzholov related the commendable example of the Tatar agitator Lance-Corporal Ia. Muzafarov.⁴⁰ Many of the Tatar and Bashkir troops in Muzafarov's battalion possessed no Russian-language knowledge, but within a year, these soldiers had become mostly fluent in the language. Muzafarov accomplished this by translating the most essential political and military terms into Tatar and Bashkir so he could conduct basic battlefield instructional sessions. As time progressed, Muzafarov conducted more and more of his instructional and political work in Russian until these troops understood the language without difficulty. In line with PURKKA's language policies, Muzafarov also ensured that these soldiers maintained a strong connection to their native languages. Frustrated by the fact that PURKKA sent so few political tracts written in Bashkir and Tatar to his battalion, Muzafarov assembled a mobile library containing 46 books and leaflets written in these languages, as well as six dictionaries used by members of the battalion for political and personal translation work.

Muzafarov's strategy for instructing the soldiers in his battalion exemplified PURKKA's ideal approach to language tutelage and propaganda among non-Russian soldiers. These troops certainly benefited from the efforts of enterprising political workers like Muzafarov, but it is

Uzbeks, Tajiks, and Turkmen serving in Red Army reserve brigades. "Direktiva GLAVPU RKKA nachal'nikam politupravlennii frontov o rasprostranении i ispol'zovanii agitatsionno-propagandistskoi literatury v chastiakh deistvuiushchei armii, May 26, 1942, TsAMO f. 32, o. 920265, d. 5, t. 2, l. 461 in Zolotarev, *Russkii arkhiv*, 17 (6): 140.

⁴⁰ Amanzholov, *Opyt politiko-vospitatel'noi raboty v deistvuiushchei armii*, 24-29.

unclear how typical such cases were. After all, throughout the war PURKKA struggled to allocate non-Russian political workers to frontline units. Finding Russian speakers, in contrast, posed no such difficulties, even if many of these Russophones had little pedagogical training. PURKKA intended for Russian language propaganda to complement agitprop delivered in Kazakh and other non-Russian languages, but the urgent need for Kazakh soldiers to learn Russian coupled with the difficulty of locating Kazakh agitators forced frontline political sections to prioritize the Russian language over Kazakh.

Intertwined Histories: The Creation of a Kazakh Historical Narrative through Frontline Propaganda

Throughout the war, PURKKA operated under the assumption that Soviet soldiers of all nationalities would respond to the same essential propaganda themes. For this reason, frontline agitators articulated the same core messages to all Red Army personnel: hatred for the fascist invaders on the one hand, and love for the Soviet Union, the Communist Party, and Stalin on the other.⁴¹ We have seen, however, that PURKKA also instructed its political workers to take a differentiated approach to non-Russian troops. What did this effort to customize agitprop for the benefit of Kazakh soldiers mean in practice? In his study of Soviet culture, the historian Jeffrey Brooks notes that the Great Patriotic War generated “a plurality of intertwined narratives and a range of perspectives” within the Soviet ideological establishment.⁴² Brooks’ observation is

⁴¹ Karel Berkhoff explores these themes in his *Motherland in Danger*. See also Argyrios K. Pisiotis, “Images of Hate in the Art of War,” in Richard Stites (ed.), *Culture and Entertainment in Wartime Russia* (Bloomington, 1995), 141-156. For two of many articles in the Kazakh frontline press detailing German atrocities, see “Bizding adamarymyzdyng tögilen qany kek alugha shaqyrady,” *Maidan pravdasy*, December 10, 1942, 2; “Nemisterding maidanektegi adamdy zhoiu lageri,” *Otan ushin urysqa: Kareliia maidanyning qyzylasker gazetasy*, September 26, 1944, 4.

⁴² Jeffrey Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin! Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War* (Princeton, 2001), 160.

especially applicable to the production frontline Kazakh propaganda under the auspices of PURKKA. From 1941 to 1945, PURKKA agitators developed several narratives designed to instill Soviet patriotism in Kazakh soldiers while referencing the national history and traditions of the Kazakh people. The key question for PURKKA was how to balance these sometimes complementary and oftentimes competing narratives.

One of the most heavily promoted of these narratives focused on the past and present glory of the Russian [*ruskii*] people.⁴³ During the height of the battle of Stalingrad in the winter of 1942, PURKKA instructed frontline agitators to educate Kazakh and other non-Russian soldiers about the illustrious defenders of Russia from ages past. The stated goal of these efforts was to ensure that a “feeling of Russian, Soviet patriotism becomes truly second nature for all Red Army commanders and soldiers.”⁴⁴ In need of historically derived military exemplars whose stories would supposedly resonate with all Soviet peoples, wartime propagandists consciously focused on commanders who served past Russian states [*gosudarstva*] – either Muscovy or the Russian Empire. All of the commanders highlighted in these propaganda tracts defended Russian imperial lands against foreign and particularly German invaders. In March 1942, for example, Deputy PURKKA Director Fedor Kuznetsov ordered political workers to explain to Red Army soldiers of all nationalities that the Germans had been attempting to enslave Russia for 700 years and that for this entire period the Russians had bravely defended their Motherland from the incursions of these “bandits.”⁴⁵ The authors of these propaganda tracts emphasized that

⁴³ Propaganda related to pre-Bolshevik military heroes became a conspicuous component of military agitprop as early as 1937. Brandenberger, *Propaganda State in Crisis*, 246-247.

⁴⁴ “Velikie traditsii russkogo naroda,” *Krasnaia zvezda*, May 22, 1943, 1.

⁴⁵ “Direktiva GLAVPU RKKKA nachal’nikam politupravlennii frontov, okrugov i otdel’nykh armii ob ispol’zovanii v agitastionno-propagandistskoi rabote vazhnoi daty – 700-letii razgroma nemetskikh psov-rytsarei na chudskom ozere, March 28, 1943, TsAMO f. 32, o. 920265, d. 5, t. 1, l. 281 in Zolotarev, *Russkii arkhiv* 17 (6): 123-124.

Red Army soldiers of all nationalities should internalize the mental fortitude and martial prowess of the great commanders of Russian history.⁴⁶

By asserting that military acumen and a high capacity for martial leadership were timeless aspects of the Russian national character, this narrative explicitly reinforced the notion that the Russians were the elder brother of the Soviet multinational family. Citing the “ever victorious” history of the united “Russian warrior people,” the Kazakh frontline press also enjoined Kazakh soldiers to look to their Russian peers as examples of bravery and martial skill in the contemporary Great Patriotic War.⁴⁷ This narrative considerably blurred the distinction between Russia and the Soviet Union. The result was an explicit projection of “Russianness” as, in historian Geoffrey Hosking’s formulation, “...an ethnic and imperial amalgam, a blend of *russkii*, *rossiiskii*, and Soviet elements.”⁴⁸ An essential component of this narrative was the assertion that being a Soviet-Kazakh patriot meant being simultaneously loyal to the Soviet Union, Russia, and Kazakhstan.⁴⁹ As the war progressed, Kazakh frontline propagandists deliberately conflated the terms *russkii*, *rossiiskii*, and *sovetskii*, leading to the articulation of compound identities that combined these elements in new ways.

References to Russian historical figures were ubiquitous in frontline Kazakh propaganda, but this glorification of the Russians did not prevent the creation of a parallel narrative based on

⁴⁶ See “Velikaia Otechestvennaia voina sovetskogo naroda”, *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, June 25, 1941, 2-3; “Iz geroicheskogo proshlogo: brusilovskii proryv”, *ibid*, August 22, 1941, 2; “Polkovodets Suvorov”, *ibid*, July 24, 1941, 4; “Pust’ vdokhnovliaet krasnykh voinov muzhestvennyi obraz nashikh velikikh predkov!” *ibid*, November 24, 1941, 3; “Velikie polkovodtsy: razgrom nemetskikh psov-rytsarei Aleksandrom Nevskim v 1242 gody,” *ibid*, April 5, 1942, 2; “Aleksandr Suvorov,” *Otandy qorghauda*, January 9, 1944, 2; “Mikhail Kutuzov,” *ibid*, April 5, 1944. See also Amanzholov, “Komandir – dusha boevoi spaiki i sokhraneniia boevykh traditsii chasti,” June 1943, in *Opyt politko-vospitatel’noi raboty v deistvuiushchei armii*, 72-76

⁴⁷ “Orys khalqy – kenes Qalyqtarynyng aghasy.” *Otandy qorghauda*, May 31, 1944, 1.

⁴⁸ Geoffrey Hosking, *Rulers and Victims: The Russians in the Soviet Union* (Cambridge MA, 2006), 210.

⁴⁹ See for example Ilya Ehrenburg’s article “Kazakhi,” in *Za rodinu*, October 22, 1942.

the national history of the Kazakh people. Indeed, it was common for PURKKA leaders to criticize frontline political organs for not doing enough to popularize the “heroic past and popular traditions of the Russian people *and* the brotherly peoples of the Soviet Union”. (Emphasis mine).⁵⁰ In line with this and similar directives, propaganda workers in Moscow and Almaty constructed a venerable and suitably militant historical chronicle for the Kazakhs. Kazakh warrior-leaders who actively fought for the freedom and independence of their people occupied center stage in this agitprop drama.⁵¹

The creation of a heroic narrative based on Kazakh national history began as early as the fall of 1941.⁵² In September 1941, the editors of *Kazakhstanskaia pravda* published an issue dedicated to the 25th anniversary of the great Kazakh uprising of 1916.⁵³ PURKKA subsequently republished these articles in several frontline Kazakh newspapers. Kazakh rebels launched this uprising in response to a tsarist decree calling them up for military labor duty. The movement lasted into the early 1920s and at its height encompassed the entire Kazakh steppe. The authors of these articles portrayed the uprising as nothing less than the culmination of the centuries-long national-liberation struggle of the Kazakh people against tsarist colonialism. As such, this uprising became an important component of the inspirational narrative constructed for Kazakh soldiers during the war against Nazi Germany.

⁵⁰ See Gatagova, *TsK KP(b) i natsional'nyi vopros*, vol. 2, 758.

⁵¹ PURKKA's idolization of Kazakh warrior-heroes from the pre-Soviet period contradicts Timothy Blauvelt's assertion that “There was no real mention anywhere...of the living traditions of freedom fighting among the minorities – mainly because these traditions had often developed in defensive struggles against Russian conquerors.” As this chapter will demonstrate, there is an element of truth to Blauvelt's argument, but it is overstated. Blauvelt, “Military Mobilisation and National Identity in the Soviet Union,” 51.

⁵² Belan, *Na vsekh frontakh*, 55.

⁵³ “Kazakhskii narod – aktivnyi uchastnik Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny”, *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, September 14, 1941, 3; “Sluchai v muzee,” *ibid.* 3; “V te dni...,” *ibid.* 3.

According to this narrative, the 1916 uprising was an anti-colonial rebellion as well as a civil war between indigenous classes. From this perspective, the Russian colonizers had established their oppressive and exploitative control over the toiling Kazakh masses by allying with indigenous “semi-feudal elites” [*bai*].⁵⁴ Whereas wartime Soviet propagandists presented the image of a Russian nation united from time immemorial, Kazakh agitprop workers portrayed Kazakh society during the 1916 uprising as ridden with internal conflict and civil war. This characterization allowed frontline propagandists to characterize the rebellion as a historically contingent event. According to this logic, once objective circumstances changed with the establishment of Soviet power on the steppe, the Kazakhs had no reason to oppose cooperation with Russia since the former “prison house of peoples” was now under the control of the “Bolshevik-led proletariat”.

For frontline Kazakh agitators there was thus no contradiction between “preserving the militant traditions of the [Kazakh] warriors” who fought in the 1916 uprising and defending the Soviet Union against the fascist invaders.⁵⁵ The propagandistic narrative surrounding the 1916 uprising highlighted several themes that would become cornerstones of wartime depictions of the Kazakh anti-colonial struggle during the next several years. First, by shifting the onus of guilt for exploiting the “Kazakh masses” away from Russian administrators and onto a multinational assortment of class enemies, these articles minimized the intensity of Russo-Kazakh antagonism during the tsarist period. This approach was logical given the ongoing effort to portray pre-

⁵⁴ Historically, the *bais* were the wealthy in Kazakh pastoral society who owned large numbers of livestock. During the early 1930s, Soviet authorities launched a *debaïization* campaign in Kazakhstan designed to destroy the *bais* as a class and eliminate resistance to collectivization in the Kazakh *aul*. As was the case with the kulaks in the Slavic regions of the Soviet Union, local Party and government officials often applied the *bai* label arbitrarily to legitimize the repression of individuals opposed to collectivization. Zh. Ābīlghozhin, “Bai,” in Nysanbaev, “*Qazaqstan*”. *Ūltyq entsiklopediia*, vol. 2, 48.

⁵⁵ “Znamenatel’naia data”, *Kazakhstanskaia pravda* September 14, 1941, 1.

Soviet Russian generals as figures of emulation for Kazakh soldiers. Second, the focus on class warfare buttressed the notion that the Russians were the elder brother of the Kazakhs by explicitly portraying the Russian proletariat as the savior of the Kazakh people. Lastly, these articles imputed a strong Soviet connotation to the Russo-Kazakh friendship by associating the final liberation of the Kazakh toiling masses with the Bolshevik revolution.

Concurrent with the start of the Soviet counteroffensive near Stalingrad in November 1942, the Agitprop Section of the Kazakh Communist Party published another frontline pamphlet that stressed the class-based nature of the Russo-Kazakh colonial conflict.⁵⁶ Unlike previous propaganda materials, this pamphlet extended this narrative into the early 18th century. According to the author(s) of this tract, the incorporation of the Kazakh territories into the Russian state was the only alternative to the seizure of these lands by foreign peoples intent on subjugating the Kazakh masses in consort with indigenous exploiting classes. Of all the enemies arrayed against the Kazakh people, this pamphlet portrayed the Mongol Dzungars as the most threatening. According to these propagandists, Tāuke khan of the Small Horde (r. 1680-1718) sought the patronage of the Russians to prevent the conquest of his people by the Dzungar Khanate. This began the inexorable process that ended in the incorporation of the remaining Kazakh territories into the tsarist empire.⁵⁷

Although this pamphlet explicitly presented the Russian people as the saviors of the Kazakh people, the author(s) did not portray the Russian state in unequivocally positive terms. The pamphlet pointed out, for example, that although Peter I demonstrated genuine concern over the Dzungar threat, in the end he constructed forts along the Kazakh steppe to accomplish his

⁵⁶ “Geroicheskoe proshloe kazakhskogo naroda”, November 5, 1942, APRK f. 708, o. 6, d. 1420, l. 129-134.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

mercantilist objectives by acquiring access to Central Asian markets. The pamphlet also maintained that the alliance forged between Catherine the Great and the Kazakh khans was in its essence a predatory relationship designed to perpetuate both the privileges of the Kazakh exploiting classes and tsarist domination over the steppe region. During the first two years of the Great Patriotic War, there was rhetorical and conceptual space for the articulation of a historical narrative that mentioned the hostile relationship between Kazakhs and Russians before the establishment of Soviet power. This was an application of the “lesser evil theory” first articulated by Andrei Zhdanov in 1936. According to this historiographical position, the annexation of Kazakh and other non-Russian territories by the Russian Empire may have had an exploitative quality, but this outcome was objectively preferable to the seizure of these lands by supposedly barbarous Asian powers.⁵⁸ To be sure, in 1941 and 1942, Soviet propagandists were quick to mitigate the depredations of the Russian Empire on the Kazakh steppe, but this narrative still conferred a substantial degree of legitimacy to the Kazakhs’ national liberation struggle.

Like wartime propaganda materials about the 1916 uprising, this pamphlet portrayed the October Revolution as the most significant event in the national life of the Kazakh people. These authors made it abundantly clear, however, that tsarist Russia facilitated the Sovietization and liberation of the Kazakhs by shielding the steppe from hostile Asian peoples. The Kazakh Communist Party was making an important statement here: the Kazakhs owed a debt to the Communist Party and the Russians for protecting them from the Asian menace and liberating them from class enemies. According to frontline propagandists, the most logical place for the Kazakhs to repay this debt was on the battlefields of the Great Patriotic War.⁵⁹ This notion of a

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Kazakh debt to Russia and the Soviet Union pervaded subsequent propagandistic depictions of the Kazakh anti-colonial rebellions of the 18th and 19th centuries.⁶⁰ All of these articles acknowledged the colonial nature of Russo-Kazakh relations before 1917, but they also stressed that tsarist Russia had protected the Kazakhs from their “backward” neighbors and established the foundations for the integration of the Kazakhs into the Soviet Union.

The historians David Brandenberger and Lowell Tillet have argued that the Soviet Communist Party lost interest in non-Russian history as source of inspirational propaganda in 1944. These scholars have overstated their case – during the war non-Russian history never “lapsed into obsolescence” as Brandenberger claims.⁶¹ Kazakh soldiers were still heavily engaged on all fronts at this time, and PURKKA continued to insist on the production of historically based propaganda for these troops. That said, the content of Kazakh frontline propaganda did change considerably in 1944-1945. These two years were a period of transition during which PURKKA shifted the chronological focus of its propaganda away from the Kazakh anti-colonial struggle and onto different periods of Kazakh national history.

What accounts for this shift in narrative focus? The available archival evidence is spotty on this point, but it seems that beginning in 1944 powerful officials like Stalin and Aleksandrov would no longer tolerate propagandistic depictions of conflict between Russians and non-Russian peoples.⁶² The Russians had likely become so central to notions of Soviet patriotism that

⁵⁹ For an elaboration of these propaganda themes, see “Kazakhskii narod v velikom sodruzhestve sovetshikh narodov”, *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, December 4, 1942, 2.

⁶⁰ “Geroi-batyry kazakhskogo naroda: Srym Datov,” *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, October 19, 1943, 2; “Kenesary Kasymov,” *ibid*, October 26, 1943, 4; “Ablai”, *Otandy qorghauda*, April 12, 1944, 4.

⁶¹ Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, 129. See also Lowell Tillet, *The Great Friendship: Soviet Historians on the Non-Russian Nationalities* (Chapel Hill, 1969), 76-83.

⁶² For the debate surrounding the history of the Kazakh SSR, see Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, 123-132.

negative references to them threatened to destabilize the entire propagandistic edifice. In any case, during the last two years of the war PURKKA propagandists began to project the Kazakh heroic narrative into the distant past. A frontline lecture written by Amanzholov in March 1944 and delivered at the front exemplified this trend.⁶³ Amanzholov began his pamphlet by describing the struggles of the Saki and Massagetean tribes (referred to here as the ancestors of the Kazakhs, Uzbeks, and other Central Asian peoples) against the expansionist designs of the Achaemenid Persians in the 6th Century BCE. Amanzholov went on to describe the struggles of various Central Asian tribes and polities against successive waves of invaders ranging from the Macedons under Alexander the Great to the Arabs, Kara-Khitans, and Mongol armies of Chingis Khan.

In this lecture, Amanzholov depicted skillful rulers and the ever-stoic “people” as the defenders of the independent existence of the “Kazakh” people. Here Amanzholov pointedly contrasted “the people” with perfidious collaborators. Hostile class elements once again figured prominently in this latter category. For example, according to Amanzholov, it was the Sogdian nobles and clergy who supported the Arab conquerors, while the landlords, khans, and Muslim clergymen “groveled before Chingis” instead of supporting the Naiman leader Küchlük in his desperate campaign against the Mongol armies. Amanzholov’s lecture retained key elements of the historical narrative constructed for Kazakh soldiers during the first three years of the Great Patriotic War, namely, simultaneous patriotic resistance to foreign invaders and indigenous exploiter-collaborators, but shifted this theme to the distant past.

⁶³ Amanzholov, “Geroicheskie traditsii kazakhskogo naroda”, in *Opyt politiko-vospitatel'noi raboty v deistvuiushchei armii*, 81-85.

Only one figure from the colonial period of Kazakh history seems to have survived the propagandistic purge that took place in 1944 – Choqan Valikhanov (1835-1865).⁶⁴ Another frontline propaganda tract written in September 1944 by Amanzholov explicitly portrayed Valikhanov as a major advocate of cooperation and friendship between the Kazakh and Russian peoples. This pamphlet pointed out that unlike Kenesary Qasymūly and the other Kazakh tribal leaders who combatted Russian forces, Valikhanov served the Russian Empire with distinction as a military officer and scholar. According to Amanzholov, Valikhanov combatted “the inculcation of an [Islamic] fanaticism into the Kazakhs that would have separated them from European culture and endangered the prospects for a friendly union between the Kazakh and Russian peoples”. Amanzholov went on to portray Valikhanov as a progressive political actor who opposed the reactionary policies of tsarism as well as the exploitative and reactionary practices of sultans, *bais*, and other Kazakh elites.⁶⁵ The message embedded in this pamphlet, as in most frontline Kazakh propaganda materials written in 1944 and 1945, was clear – the path to future victory and development lay through close cooperation with the Russian people.

“True Sons and Daughters of the Kazakh People”: The Creation of a Soviet-Kazakh Heroic Pantheon

⁶⁴ Even before the Great Patriotic War, Valikhanov Soviet academics and propagandists for his contributions had portrayed Valikhanov in a positive manner because he laid much of the ethnographic foundation for the articulation of distinctive Kazakh and Kyrgyz identities during the early 1920s, and because he became a harsh critic of the tsarist autocracy and serfdom. Before 1941 however, Soviet accounts tended to minimize Valikhanov’s military service and his participation in imperial campaigns in Turkestan. See for example the article by E. R. Fedorov, which he wrote under the aegis of the Kazakh affiliate of the Soviet Academy of Sciences in either March or June 1941. This article can be found in APRK f. 708, o. 5/1, d. 612, l. 44-49.

⁶⁵ “Qazaqtyng bīrīnshī bīlīmpazy Shoqan Ualikhanov”, *Otandy qorghauda*, May 13, 1944, 3; Amanzholov, “Svetlyi obraz pervogo ofitsera-kazakha”, in *Opyt politiko-vospitatel’noi raboty v deistvuushchei armii*, 86-88.

The day after the German invasion of the Soviet Union Lev Mekhlis, the head of PURKKA from June 1941 to July 1942, ordered military district commanders in the western regions of the Soviet Union to publish essays in frontline newspapers describing the feats of heroes of the Soviet Union.⁶⁶ By war's end, PURKKA had disseminated information about thousands of these Red Army heroes. PURKKA officials selected actual military personnel for this idolization, but frontline propagandists exaggerated, distorted, or simply manufactured the battlefield exploits of these soldiers to such an extent that they became, in historian Elena Seniavskaia's formulation, symbols constructed as "abstract, generalized examples for emulation."⁶⁷ Practically every Soviet soldier became familiar with the names of key martyr-heroes like Nikolai Gastello, Zoia Kosmodem'ianskaia, and Aleksandr Matrosov. These heroes stood above (but not necessarily outside of) national categories and functioned as pan-Soviet ideal types.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ "Direktiva GUPP KA voennym sovetam i nachal'nikam UPP LVO, PriBOVO, ZapOVO, KOVO, OdVO o sodержanii frontovykh, armeiskikh i divizionnykh gazet v sviazi s nachalom voiny", June 23, 1941, TsAMO f. 32, o. 795436, d. 3, l. 187-189 in Zolotarev, *Russkii arkhiv*, 17 (6): 18. Military propagandists began focusing attention on rank-and-file Red Army soldiers during the 1930s. They did this partially because the NKVD purged several great Soviet commanders during the late 1930s, turning them into unacceptable sources of inspiration. Brandenberger, *Propaganda State in Crisis*, 252.

⁶⁷ Elena Seniavskaia, "Heroic Symbols: The Reality and Mythology of War," *Russian Studies in History*, 37 (1) (Summer 1998), 61-87. Soviet propagandists frequently described wartime exploits in a way that had virtually nothing in common with reality. This is particularly evident in the case of the famous 28 Panfilov heroes who supposedly died defending Moscow from a furious German assault in 1941. The proliferation and popularization of this fanciful story came about as the result of several factors - the confusing situation at the front, the pressures on frontline journalists and propagandists to find a suitably heroic story useful to propaganda authorities, and the willingness of Communist Party officials to maintain the fiction of the story. See Alexander Statiev, "'La Garde meurt mais ne se rend pas!': Once Again on the 28 Panfilov Heroes," *Kritika*, vol. 13 (4): (Fall 2012), 769-798. See also Rosalinde Sartori, "On the Making of Heroes, Heroines, and Saints," in Stites, *Culture and Entertainment in Wartime Russia*, 176-193. Note also that some propaganda materials produced by PURKKA described the cowardly actions of non-Russian soldiers at the front rather than feats of bravery. For example on the eve of the 25th anniversary of the October Revolution PURKKA published two leaflets in Armenian - one described the exploits of the Armenian Sturmovik pilot N. Stepanian, while the second leaflet told the story of the "disgraceful death of the oath-breaker Serdiuk," who fled from the field of battle. "Listovki dlia krasnoarmeitsev nerusskoi natsional'nosti," *Krasnaia zvezda*, January 12, 1943, 4.

⁶⁸ The first run of leaflets published by PURKKA in non-Russian languages described the feats of the sniper Ludmila Pavlichenko - a Russian who participated in the defense of Sevastopol. Ibid.

The propagandists who wrote for Kazakh frontline newspapers complemented references to this pan-Soviet group by constructing a similarly glorious pantheon of heroes from Kazakhstan. The figures in this latter group were members of several nationalities – what united them was their upbringing in the Kazakh republic. With these heroes, PURKKA promoted a geographically based Kazakhstani identity that transcended nationality. The twenty-eight Panfilovite heroes were the most famous Kazakhstani heroes constructed by Soviet propagandists in this manner. These soldiers were members of the 8th Guards Rifle Division, which was led by General Ivan Panfilov after being formed in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. According to legend, these heroes died protecting the approach to Moscow from a furious Nazi assault. Propaganda tracts usually emphasized the national heterogeneity of this group, which consisted of representatives of Slavic as well as Central Asian nationalities.⁶⁹ The Panfilovite narrative strongly implied that multinational Kazakhstan exemplified the Soviet “friendship of peoples” propaganda line, a dogmatic principle that became a key component of Soviet ideology during the struggle against German fascism (see pages 221-232).⁷⁰

Alongside the promotion of Kazakhstani heroes, PURKKA began propagandizing the exploits of soldiers who were Kazakh by nationality. This practice began almost immediately after Kazakhs troops began arriving at the front in the winter of 1941. As of February 1942, the Soviet government had awarded 195 Kazakh soldiers for distinction in battle, and 96 Kazakhs earned the title Hero of the Soviet Union between 1941 and 1945.⁷¹ Whereas frontline agitators

⁶⁹ See for example *Krasnaia zvezda*, July 28, 1942.

⁷⁰ For examples of this ideological position, see *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*, July 25, 1941; *ibid*, October 4, 1942; *ibid*, December 4, 1942; *ibid*, November 30, 1943.

⁷¹ “Pokazateli nenavisti sovetского naroda k vragu”, February 24, 1942. APRK f. 708, o. 6, d. 78, l. 26-27. See also Henry Sakaida, *Heroes of the Soviet Union, 1941-1945* (Oxford, 2004), 8.

portrayed Gastello and Matrosov as figures that all Red Army soldiers were supposed to emulate, Kazakh soldiers remained the primary recipients of information pertaining to Kazakh heroes.⁷² Frontline Kazakh newspapers devoted substantial attention to these Kazakh heroes, but PURKKA leaders expected even these periodicals to contain ample references to “the leading role of the Russian people and Russian soldiers in the Fatherland war.”⁷³ Indeed, these newspapers printed stories about Russian soldiers just as often as they did articles about heroic Kazakh troops.⁷⁴ PURKKA strove to expose Kazakh soldiers to two tightly interwoven battlefield narratives – the pan-Soviet one, which in practice afforded pride of place to Russian soldiers, and one focusing on Kazakh heroes. These narratives were hardly distinct – they constituted two sides of an unmistakably Soviet propaganda coin.

⁷² This was a deliberate strategy on the part of PURKKA. See Ibid. The 8th Panfilov Rifle Division was an exception to this tendency because propagandists widely disseminated the supposed exploits of this unit to Soviet audiences. When PURKKA addressed propaganda about this unit to non-Kazakhstanis, however, propagandists said and wrote relatively little about the formation’s Central Asian origins. See for example V. Koroteev “Gvardeitsy Panfilova v boiakh za Moskvu,” *Krasnaia zvezda*, November 27, 1941, 3; “Peredovaia stat’ia gazety ‘Krasnaia Zvezda,’” “Nagrazhdenie 28 pavshikh geroev,” July 22, 1942 in Pokrovskii, *Kazakhstan v period Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny Sovetskogo soiuza*, vol. 1, 148-149.

⁷³ A PURKKA directive issued in April 1944 chided the editors of non-Russian frontline newspapers for not devoting enough attention to the leading role of the Russian people. See Zolotarev, *Russkii arkhiv*, 17 (6): 266-267. Snipers became a particularly exalted group in the frontline Kazakh press. See for example “Snaiper Zhūmadīrov,” *Maidan pravdasy*, April 1, 1943, 2; “Snaiperdyng sharty”, *Stalin tuy: qyzylāskerler gazetī*, May 14, 1943, 2.

⁷⁴ Frontline Kazakh newspapers also contained information about soldiers who were neither Russian nor Kazakh, but the number of these articles remained small during the war.



Figure 10: “Samed goes to his death so that Semen will not die, and Semen sacrifices his life for Samed... Their password is ‘the Motherland’ and their slogan is ‘Victory’!” Here the Russian Semen is embracing and protecting Samed (most likely an Uzbek) much as a father would his son. Note that although the wounded Samed is passive, he is still holding his weapon.

Viktor Koretskii, 1943.

PURKKA intensified this effort to glorify Kazakh Red Army heroes after Communist Party authorities began frowning on the Kazakh anti-colonial struggle as a viable source of frontline propaganda. Two of the most important Kazakh heroes constructed by PURKKA in 1944-1945 were Mānshük Māmetova and Āliia Moldaghūlova. According to frontline leaflets and articles printed during these years, both of these “true daughters of the Kazakh people” joined the Komsomol at an early age and both volunteered for combat duty and became infantrymen. After arriving at the front, both young women quickly mastered their military specialties and fought against the fascist enemy with almost superhuman determination. Among the first to charge into battle with the cry: “For the Motherland! For Stalin!” these heroines inspired their fellow soldiers with their bravery and fortitude. Wounded in battle, Māmetova and

Moldaghūlova continued firing their weapons until their last breath, in this way giving their lives for the Soviet Motherland.⁷⁵

Why did PURKKA officials place two women at the center of the Kazakh Red Army heroic pantheon? A fully satisfactory answer to this question awaits further research, but there are several possibilities. The historian Anna Krylova has argued that Soviet wartime propagandists deliberately sought to erase discrepancies between femininity and service in combat by portraying these components of female soldier identity as fully compatible.⁷⁶ In the context of the Great Patriotic War, there was thus nothing unusual about lionizing female soldiers. However, the cases of Māmetova and Moldaghūlova were unusual because these women received far more attention from frontline propagandists than Kazakh heroes who were men. Karel Berkhoff notes that the portrayal of brave Soviet women on the battlefield implicitly called into question the adequacy of male soldiers.⁷⁷ It is possible that by pointing to the examples of Māmetova and Moldaghūlova, PURKKA was attempting to shame male Kazakh soldiers into fighting more stoically.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ See Amanzholov, “Manshuk Mametova,” in *Opyt politko-vospitatel’noi raboty v deistvuushchei armii*, 99-100 and “Aliia Moldagulova,” in *ibid*, 108-109. See also “Geroicheskaia doch’ kazakhskogo naroda,” *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, January 9, 1944, p. 2; “Nasha Manshuk,” *ibid*, March 8, 1944, 2; “Aliia Moldagulova,” *ibid.*, June 27, 1944, 2; “Mānshuk Māmetova,” *Otandy qorghauda*, March 8, 1944, 2; “Āliia Moldaqūlovanıng erlīgī,” *ibid*, 2 “Batyr-qyz,” *Otan iishīn uryysqa*, June 13, 1944, 3.

⁷⁶ Krylova, *Soviet Women in Combat*, 217-229.

⁷⁷ Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger*, 232.

⁷⁸ Such a strategy on the part of political and military officials would not have been new in Russian history. The Women’s Death Battalion provides an intriguing example of this phenomenon. Maria Bochkareva and government authorities formed this battalion in July 1917. One of the primary goals behind the formation of this unit was to inspire the male soldiers of the faltering Russian army and shame them into fighting more effectively on the battlefield. In this way, Bochkareva and her military patrons hoped, Russia would escape a calamitous defeat. See Melissa K. Stockdale, “‘My Death for the Motherland Is Happiness’: Women, Patriotism, and Soldiering in Russia’s Great War, 1914-1917,” *The American Historical Review* vol. 109 (1): (February 2004), 78-118.

The glorification of these two heroines may also have been part of the Soviet campaign against “patriarchal-feudal survivals” in the Central Asian republics. During the first three decades of Bolshevik rule, Soviet officials forcefully attempted to end the seclusion of women from public life in order to “modernize” Central Asian societies and transform these women into full-fledged participants in the socialist project.⁷⁹ It is reasonable to posit that by devoting so much attention to Mămetova and Moldaghūlova, PURKKA was connecting notions of Central Asian femininity to military service and loyalty to the Soviet Union. The Great Patriotic War provided PURKKA with Kazakh examples of female aggression and self-sacrifice that were not readily available before 1941, and PURKKA utilized these examples to make a forceful statement about the success of the Soviet anti-patriarchal campaign while demonstrating that Kazakh men and women both had the responsibility to defend the Soviet motherland with arms in hand.

It is important to note, however, that the attributes ascribed to Mămetova and Moldaghūlova by frontline agitators were not “national” in any significant way. In this narrative, the only characteristics of these women that were specifically Kazakh were their names and places of origin. The essential similarity between Soviet Red Army heroes was an intentional aspect of PURKKA’s propaganda work. This strategy reflected the logic informing Soviet nationality policies as a whole during the Great Patriotic War. From 1941 to 1945, Soviet leaders and ideologues portrayed national diversity as an innate and advantageous characteristic

⁷⁹ For the particulars of the Soviet anti-patriarchal campaign in Uzbekistan, see Gregory J. Massell, *The Surrogate Proletariat: Moslem Women and Revolutionary Strategies in Soviet Central Asia, 1919-1929* (Princeton, 1974); Northrop, *Veiled Empire*; Marianne Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism* (Seattle, 2006). Like Turkmen women, Kazakh women did not traditionally wear a veil. For this reason, the campaign against the veil was not an integral component of the women’s liberation campaign in Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. See Edgar, *Tribal Nation*, 221-260.

of socialist society, but only insofar as this diversity contributed to the strengthening of a pan-Soviet society united in purpose and led by the Communist Party and the Russian people.

This formulation demanded only a perfunctory elaboration of specific national traits and focused on characteristics that PURKKA agitators portrayed as common to Soviet citizens of all nationalities – bravery, stoicism, and fidelity to the socialist motherland. As Amir Weiner has argued, participation in the struggle against the fascist enemy became central to how Soviet leaders framed the terms of belonging within the Soviet polity.⁸⁰ The propagandistic narrative of militant Kazakh heroism firmly inscribed the Kazakh people into the Soviet family of nations. By 1944, PURKKA continued to characterize the Kazakhs as a distinct people, but frontline propagandists portrayed the particular national traits of the Kazakhs as secondary to their ascribed identities as Soviet patriots. It was hardly coincidental that this shift in narrative focus was concurrent with the abolition of the Kazakh national brigades in 1944. During the final two years of the Great Patriotic War, most Kazakhs fought in regular all-Union units that deemphasized the national affiliation of their soldiers in favor of an all-encompassing Soviet identity. At the same time, frontline propagandists increasingly circumscribed Kazakh identity within the chronological boundaries of the Soviet period and the Great Patriotic War. The Soviet leadership made a conscious decision to emphasize the Soviet identity of the Kazakhs over and above their national identity, and this decision determined the organizational and ideological parameters of Kazakh integration into the Red Army.

In addition to the Red Army pantheon forged by PURKKA in the fires of the Great Patriotic War, frontlines agitators articulated a complementary narrative focusing on Kazakh participation in the Civil War. The most important figure in this narrative was Amankeldi

⁸⁰ See Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, 216-235.

Imanov, and beginning in 1943 Kazakh frontline propagandists intensively promoted Amankeldī as a symbol of Bolshevik loyalty and Kazakh military virtue. Amankeldī achieved fame as a key commander of the 1916 uprising. An exceptional guerilla leader, Amankeldī led his partisan forces in a desperate struggle against heavily armed imperial formations until the collapse of the tsarist empire in February 1917. Rather than dispersing his forces after the overthrow of tsarism, Amankeldī joined the Bolsheviks and fought against both the White general Dutov and the nationalist Alash Orda government. In 1919, these nationalists moved against Amankeldī and killed him.⁸¹

Communist Party propagandists in Kazakhstan glorified Amankeldī throughout the 1920s and 1930s, but PURKKA devoted substantial attention to the Bolshevik hero only in 1943-1945. This was because one of the few narrative options available to PURKKA after it stopped glorifying the Kazakh national-liberation struggle against tsarist Russia was to focus on Kazakh heroes who were unambiguously loyal to Soviet Russia. In the summer of 1943, Kazakh newspapers on the frontlines and in Kazakhstan published a series of articles devoted to Amankeldī.⁸² These articles adhered carefully to the narrative of the 1916 uprising elaborated in earlier frontline tracts. Rather than attempting to minimize Amankeldī's opposition to tsarist forces, these tracts portrayed Amankeldī as a tireless defender of the Kazakh people who opposed the indigenous elites of Kazakh society with the same fury with which he combatted

⁸¹ Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, 122-124.

⁸² Soviet frontline propaganda contained references to Amankeldī as early as May 1942, but he became a much more significant subject of this propaganda in 1944. See "Vystuplenie sekretaria TsK KP(b)K tov. Shaiakhmetova 2.5.1942 na mitinge boitsov i komandirov 8-i – gvardeiskoi im. General-maiora Panfilova divizii i resolutsia mitinga," APRK f. 708, o. 6, d. 1417a, l. 9. Sometime before April 1943 PURKKA received 100 copies of a book dedicated to Amankeldī from the Kazakh SSR for the benefit of Kazakh soldiers. See APRK f. 708, o. 6, d. 1417b, l. 88, April 15, 1943.

tsarist domination.⁸³ These articles also pointed out that the Kazakh people's centuries long struggle against tsarist domination deeply inspired Amankeldī during his military campaigns. Indeed, Amankeldī's extended family fought alongside the famed 19th century rebel leader Kenesary Qasymūly, and according to these propaganda materials, the precocious Amankeldī imbibed legends about Kenesary's great 19th century rebellion from a very young age.⁸⁴

PURKKA did not focus exclusively on Amankeldī and other Kazakh Bolsheviks from 1943 to 1945. For example, a frontline letter sent "to the Kazakh people by the soldiers, commanders, and political workers of the 8th Panfilov Rifle Division" that was printed in *Kazakhstanskaia pravda* in July 1943 suggested that Kazakh soldiers were drawing inspiration from a variety of sources simultaneously. First, the letter referred to "the great past of the Russian people – Poltava, Borodino, and Sevastopol." After these battles, the letter listed the legendary heroes of the Kazakh people Amankeldī, Isatai Taimanūly, and Makhambet Ōtemīsūly, as well the Bolshevik Civil War heroes Mikola Shchors, Grigorii Kotovskii, Vasiliĭ Chapaev, and Mikhail Frunze.⁸⁵ Similarly, in April 1944 the Kazakh frontline press included Amankeldī in the same heroic list as the "genius commander" Abylai khan, the "staunch and brave" Kenesary, and other pre-Soviet Kazakh rebels.⁸⁶ These positive references to the Kazakh

⁸³ "Amankeldī batyrym," *Otan ūshin uryysqa*, April 15, 1944, 2; "Amankeldī Imanovqa arnalghan kōrme", *Sotsialistik Qazaqstan*, June 11, 1944, 4.

⁸⁴ "Amankeldining batyr babalary", *ibid.* June 18, 1944, 3. From 1837 to 1844, Kenesary led the tribes of the Middle Horde in one of the most successful Kazakh rebellions of the colonial period. Imperial military formations crushed the rebels, but Kenesary lived on in the memory of Kazakhs as an able commander and political centralizer. See Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, 64-67.

⁸⁵ "Pis'mo kazakhskomu narodu ot boitsov, komandirov i politrabotnikov ordena Lenina i krasnogo znamenii, imeni geroia sovetskogo soiuza general-maiora Panfilova 8-oi gvardeiskoi strelkovoi divizii," *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, July 4, 1943, 2. Isatai Taimanūly and Makhambet Ōtemīsūly led a rebellion in the first half of the 19th century against the khan of the Bōkei Horde and Russian colonial authorities.

⁸⁶ See for example "Nemīs basqinshylar qurtylsyn," *Otan ūshin uryysqa* April 15, 1944, 1. As Kazakh khan Abylai skillfully led several armed campaigns against the Dzungars and other Central Asian peoples. By playing the

leaders who fought against tsarist colonialism remained part of the frontline Kazakh narrative until the storming of Berlin and beyond, and Amankeldī occupied an unmistakably privileged position in this narrative. Frontline articles published in 1943-1945 maintained that two types of warrior-heroes existed in Kazakh history – the first group fought bravely but futilely for the independence of the Kazakhs, whereas the members of the second group demonstrated true military ingenuity and achieved their military objectives by allying with the Russian workers and peasants under the leadership of the Bolsheviks. According to this narrative, Amankeldī and the other heroes belonging to this second category emerged with the establishment of Soviet power on the Kazakh steppe. True heroism, these articles suggested, was the preserve of the Bolsheviks, and it was the “bright example” provided by Kazakh Bolsheviks like Amankeldī that would inspire Kazakh soldiers to achieve “victory after victory” during their march into the heart of Nazi Germany.⁸⁷

The propaganda campaign surrounding Amankeldī was a component of PURKKA’s effort to closely associate Kazakh military service with the Communist Party and the Soviet Union. Amankeldī filled an important niche in this respect – not only was he a brave and talented military commander, he was also dedicated to Soviet power and the socialist union between Kazakhstan and Russia. As the Red Army launched its final campaigns in the spring of 1945, Kazakh propagandists focused more and more on Amankeldī and Kazakh Red Army

Russians and Chinese against each other, he was able to secure the *de facto* independence of his khanate during much of the 18th century. See Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, 40-43.

⁸⁷ “Amankeldī,” *Sotsialistīk Qazqstan*, June 11, 1944, 4. See also “Amankeldī – zhauynger, bol’shevik,” *ibid.* June 18, 1944, 3. Note that Soviet propagandists presented Amankeldī as a national hero to all Soviet Kazakhs, not just soldiers. For example in May 1944, the Kazakh Communist Party organized a republic-wide sports and games celebration in honor of the 25th anniversary of Amankeldī’s death. See “Respublika dene shynyqtyrushylary Amankeldī kunine,” *ibid.*, June 11, 1944, 4. It is worth noting that Amankeldī became a major fixture of Soviet propaganda in Kazakhstan before the Great Patriotic War. In fact, the first ever Kazakh-language sound film, produced by Lenfil’ m in 1939, was a biography of Amankeldī.

heroes. PURKKA agitprop workers continued to refer to warrior-leaders from the Kazakh anti-colonial past, but as the war drew to a close they portrayed pre-Soviet Kazakh commanders like Kenesary Qasymūly as little more than fragmentary recollections in the minds of “genuine” heroes like Amankeldī, Māmetova, and Moldaghūlova.⁸⁸

Conclusion

During the Great Patriotic War PURKKA struggled to adapt its propaganda network to accord with the multinational structure of the Red Army. Logistical problems and battlefield necessity impelled frontline agitators to focus on Russian as a primary language of political and military instruction among Kazakh soldiers, but the effort to create and disseminate a nationally specific inspirational narrative continued until the end of the war. In their propaganda tracts, PURKKA agitators frequently glorified Kazakh anti-colonial heroes, but the documentary evidence suggests that the narrative of heroic resistance to the tsarist empire became politically unacceptable to Communist Party authorities in 1943. During the first three years of the war, the concept of Soviet patriotism was capacious enough to embrace multiple narratives derived from national and pan-Soviet genres, but PURKKA balanced these narratives in different ways depending on the national group in question. In need of ideologically appropriate exemplars of Kazakh heroism, in 1943 PURKKA began focusing on Kazakh heroes from the Civil and Great Patriotic Wars.

By May 1945, the heroic pantheons derived from the post-1917 period pervaded Kazakh frontline propaganda to a greater extent than at any time since the beginning of the war. This shift in narrative focus reflected and contributed to the ongoing effort on the part of Communist

⁸⁸ “Batyr bol’shevik, revolutzioner,” *Otan ishīn urysqa*, May 16, 1944, 2

Party officials in Moscow and Almaty to portray the Kazakhs as full-fledged participants in the war against fascist Germany. Wartime service became a major marker of Kazakh identity as ascribed by PURKKA. A major implication of this narrative was that the Kazakhs had become, at least from the perspective of Shcherbakov and the rest of the PURKKA leadership, a nationality that was steadfastly loyal to their Russian elder brother and the Soviet Union. Kazakh identity, at least as portrayed by PURKKA, acquired a more obviously Soviet inflection than ever before.

During the war, PURKKA agitators consistently attempted to convince Kazakh soldiers that they were full-fledged members of the Soviet multinational community. For Shcherbakov and other PURKKA officials, the main question was not whether the Kazakhs were capable of bearing arms in defense of the Soviet Motherland, but what was the best way to inspire them to do so. This suggests that PURKKA was more open to the idea of Kazakh frontline service than the NKO was, since the latter frequently issues discriminatory directives that barred Kazakhs and other non-Slavs from frontline service (see Chapter One). At the same time, there were strong similarities between PURKKA and NKO policies towards Kazakh frontline soldiers. Around the same time that the NKO demobilized most of the national units in order to emphasize the Red Army's all-Union identity, PURKKA began to deemphasize the pre-revolutionary history of the Kazakhs and intensify its efforts to Sovietize Kazakh identity. Like frontline service itself, PURKKA's propaganda campaign opened a door for Kazakh soldiers to consider themselves part of the broader Soviet community, but PURKKA expected them to do so in a way that subsumed their national identities to an overarching allegiance to the Soviet Union.

Chapter 3 - The Labor Front: Administrative Competition and the Mobilization of Kazakhstan's Workers and Peasants

In July 1942, the Central Committee of the Kazakh Communist Party held its seventh plenary session in Almaty. The main topic of discussion was Kazakhstan's contributions to the Soviet war effort.¹ Taking the rostrum, Chairman of the Kazakh Sovnarkom Nūrtas Ondasynov, a confidante of Viacheslav Molotov who frequently communicated with Stalin,² congratulated the “soldiers, commanders, and political workers” of the Red Army as well as the “Stakhanovites” working in industry and agriculture for their heroic deeds on behalf of the Soviet Motherland.³ Ondasynov averred that the workers and collective farmers of Kazakhstan deserved as much praise for their “valor and heroism” as frontline soldiers. After all, he claimed, the republic's workers and farmers were providing the Red Army with the weapons, clothing, and food it needed to launch its massive counteroffensive against the Nazi invaders in the wake of the crushing defeats of 1941. Continuing his address, Ondasynov reminded his colleagues in the Kazakh Party Central Committee that the Soviet home front was inextricably connected to the frontlines and that the successes of workers in factories and on collective farms would “facilitate the rapid destruction of the enemy.” This speech made the official position of the Kazakh government clear – the republic was an important part of the Soviet home front, and the ability of Kazakhstan's Party and government leaders to mobilize the population for “heroic

¹ “Stenograma: Zasedaniia 7-go plenuma TsK KP(b)Kazakhstana,” July 5, 1942. APRK f. 708, o. 6, d. 14, l. 1-2.

² Beibit Sapar Ali and Tursynbek Eldesbai “Ratsional'naia modernizatsiia politicheskoi sistemy sovremennogo Kazakhstana,” *TsentrAziia* (August 5, 2010).

³ Ondasynov was born in 1904 in an *aul* in South-Kazakhstan Province. From 1936 to 1938, he worked as a trust director inside Kazakhstan's Commissariat of Arable Farming, and in 1938, he became the Chairman of the East-Kazakhstan Provincial Party Committee. After the NKVD arrested Oraz Isaev, Chairman of the Kazakh Sovnarkom from 1929 to 1937, Ondasynov assumed this position and held it until 1951. See Zhanar Kanafina, “Soldat partii. Vspominaia predsedatelia Sovnarkoma KazSSR Nurtasa Undasynova,” *Karavan*, vol. 13: (March 28, 2008).

labor” was just as important as the concurrent campaign to mobilize Kazakhs for frontline service.

This chapter argues that the labor mobilization campaign in Kazakhstan accelerated the integration of the republic’s economy and workforce into the larger Soviet economy while deepening Kazakhstan’s administrative and economic subordination to the Russian republic (RSFSR) and all-Union administrative organs. Several Western historians have asserted that wartime economic mobilization led to the devolution of administrative power from Moscow to the regions.⁴ According to this argument, the sheer complexity of key tasks such as establishing evacuated enterprises forced the GKO to depend heavily on provincial Party and government leaders to implement these measures, giving these local officials “unprecedented discretionary powers in their domains.”⁵ This chapter challenges this argument, demonstrating that at least in the case of Kazakhstan, wartime labor mobilization led to the gradual reduction of the power of local Party and government officials to challenge and shape central directives.

From 1941 to 1945, Kazakhstan’s economic importance to the Soviet economy increased dramatically, and this added economic weight led Party and government leaders in Moscow to intensify their efforts to assert control over the republic’s workers and force them to produce more food, energy, and industrial goods for the sake of Soviet victory.⁶ This intensive

⁴ See especially John Barber and Mark Harrison, *The Soviet Home Front, 1941-1945: A Social and Economic History of the USSR in World War II* (London, 1991), 48-50.

⁵ James R. Harrison, *The Great Urals: Regionalism and the Evolution of the Soviet System* (Ithaca, 1999), 193. Harrison also argues that the GKO allocated more administrative power to provincial officials in order to bypass the economic commissariats, which by 1941 were widely considered ineffective implementers of the Soviet leadership’s will. This assertion is also incorrect when it comes to wartime Kazakhstan. As this chapter will demonstrate, all-Union commissariats were extremely powerful during the war and usually rode roughshod over the wishes of local Party and government officials.

⁶ For a dismissal of the idea that the State Defense Committee enjoyed a monopoly over the labor allocation process, see Sheila Fitzpatrick “War and Society in Soviet Context: Soviet Labor before, during, and after World War II,” *International Labor and Working-Class History*, vol. 35: (1989), 37-52.

mobilization campaign led to the emergence of contests between central government institutions in Moscow and subordinate government bodies in Kazakhstan over the right to manage, move, and exploit the republic's laboring populations. Local Party and government organs in the republic developed a number of strategies for maintaining control over workers and collective farmers, but in the end, the labor mobilization campaign magnified the ability of all-Union authorities to control these populations.

These central officials used this power to manipulate Kazakhstan's economy in ways that benefitted the Soviet Union as a whole but which damaged the efforts of the Kazakh Communist Party and government to modernize key economic sectors. In the end, labor mobilization deepened existing economic inequalities between Kazakhstan and Russia and accentuated the republic's status as a primary goods producer for the Soviet economy. This economic subordination to all-Union institutions was an essential component of the accelerated integration of Kazakhstan's wartime populations into Soviet administrative, economic, and ideological structures. Just as conscription brought over a million Kazakhs under the control of the NKO, labor mobilization created vast laboring armies in the republic that were under the command of Moscow-based officials

This chapter is the first substantive analysis by a Western historian of the Great Patriotic War's impact on workers and collective farmers in a Central Asian republic. The scholarly literature about Soviet workers during the Stalin period is robust, but these historians have focused almost completely on Russia.⁷ The historian Matt Payne is one of the few Western scholars who has paid serious attention to Kazakhstan's workers during the 1930s. In one of his

⁷ See in particular Moshe Lewin, *The Making of the Soviet System: Essays in the Social History of Interwar Russia* (New York, 1994); Hiroaki Kuromiya, *Stalin's Industrial Revolution: Politics and Workers, 1928-1932* (Cambridge UK, 1990); David L. Hoffmann, *Peasant Metropolis: Social Identities in Moscow, 1929-1941* (Ithaca, 1994); Lynne Viola, *Peasant Rebels under Stalin: Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance* (New York, 1999).

articles, Payne argues that Party and government officials in Moscow and Kazakhstan saw the massive Turkestan-Siberian Railway construction project as an important milieu for “proletarianizing” the Kazakhs by teaching them advanced technical skills and promoting them into responsible managerial positions.⁸ In Payne’s estimation, the key figures who oversaw the Turksīb project such as Deputy Chairman of the Sovnarkom of the RSFSR Tūrār Rysqūlov attempted to create a Kazakh proletariat in order to “nativize” Kazakhstan by placing Kazakhs in leading positions in the republic’s economy and government. At the same time, Rysqūlov and other Soviet leaders hoped that the proletarianization of the Kazakhs would obliterate their illiterate, nomadic, and otherwise “backward” cultural traits. In Payne’s view, nativization and proletarianization on the Turksīb gave birth to the nucleus of a new, Sovietized Kazakh culture. This new Kazakh culture was linguistically Russified and firmly rooted in the Soviet Union’s rapidly expanding industrial society.⁹

During the Great Patriotic War, Party and government officials continued their intensive efforts to induct the Kazakhs into the Soviet workforce. However, the rhetoric of “development” and “modernization” highlighted by Payne and which was so central to NKO conscription policies towards Central Asians is not prevalent in wartime reports about Kazakh workers. Whereas the NKO intermittently barred Central Asians from serving at the front, Soviet leaders in Kazakhstan mobilized the Kazakhs for labor throughout the war. In their internal correspondence, Skvortsov, Ondasynov, and other Soviet officials who oversaw labor mobilization portrayed Kazakh workers and farmers as full-fledged members of Soviet society

⁸ Payne, “The Forge of the Kazakh Proletariat?” in Suny, *A State of Nations*, 223-252. According to the official history of Kazakhstan, 7,879 Kazakhs were engaged in construction work on the Turksīb in 1931. Kozybaev, *Istoriia Kazakhstana*, vol. 4, 386-387.

⁹ Payne, “The Forge of the Kazakh Proletariat?” 242.

who did not require “developmental” assistance to contribute to the war effort. At the same time, the labor mobilization policies implemented by Party and government leaders consistently reminded Kazakh workers and peasants that they were not the equals of Slavic laborers.

Scholarship about workers in Kazakhstan during the Great Patriotic War is undeveloped in much the same way as research about workers and farmers in Soviet Central Asia during the 1930s. The monograph by the historians Manash Kozybaev and Nūri Edīgenov is one of the few works published in post-Soviet Kazakhstan that devotes substantial attention to wartime labor mobilization in the republic.¹⁰ Drawing on a large number of Soviet monographs and a large array of archival documents, Kozybaev and Edīgenov argue that Kazakhstan’s workers and peasants bravely labored in support of the Soviet war effort because of their inherent Soviet patriotism. These authors do a marvelous job of explaining the nuts and bolts of how Party and government authorities mobilized the republic’s populations for work in factories and on collective farms, but their conclusions are framed by the patriotic narrative that permeates scholarship about the Great Patriotic War in independent Kazakhstan.

In their monograph about the Soviet home front, the Russian historians M. V. Zefirov and D. M. Degtev provide a very different perspective than Kozybaev and Edīgenov.¹¹ The main goal of Zefirov and Degtev’s book is to deconstruct the “romanticism” and “banal propaganda” that permeates Soviet and post-Soviet scholarship about labor in wartime Russia.¹² According to these authors, Soviet labor mobilization was a violently coercive process that reflected the totalitarian nature of the Stalinist system and the Soviet leadership’s total disregard for human

¹⁰ M. K. Kozybaev and N. E. Edygenov, *Trud vo imia pobedy* (Almaty, 1995).

¹¹ M. V. Zefirov and D. M. Degtev, *Vse dlia fronta? Kak na samom dele kovalas’ pobeda* (Vladimir, 2005).

¹² *Ibid*, 405.

life. Zefirov and Degtev argue that Party and government authorities essentially conscripted Russian men, women, and children for work in factories and on collective farms. In this narrative, it was the constant threat of imprisonment and not patriotism that kept Russian workers at their stations and collective farmers at their plows, even though these workers rarely received enough food from the government to sustain themselves or their families. According to Zefirov and Degtev, these workers had even fewer rights and less freedom under the Soviet Union's wartime labor regime than during the frenetic Five-Year Plans of the 1930s.¹³

This chapter asserts that Party and government authorities employed the same violently coercive strategies for mobilizing workers and farmers in wartime Kazakhstan. Like in Russia, the labor requirements forced on Kazakhstan's workers during this period were extreme, even by the standards of the Stalinist labor policies introduced during the 1930s. Labor mobilization led to a decisive deterioration of the living standards of the republic's workers and peasants. The reports and directives produced by wartime Party and government officials generally depicted the republic's workers and collective farmers in extremely impersonal and mechanical terms. Relatively few of these reports, for example, refer to the gender or nationality of these workers. Soviet authorities in Moscow and Kazakhstan instead referred to these workers as "human resources" and treated them as faceless components of the Soviet Union's vast economic machine.¹⁴ Although this chapter focuses on the administrative dimensions of labor mobilization, it is imperative to keep in mind that the subjects of these reports were human beings who faced

¹³ Ibid, 294-355.

¹⁴ In the Soviet Union, the term "human resources" [*liudskie resursy*] was commonly used to describe the proportion of a country's population engaged in economic production to support a war effort or to people serving in the armed forces. The term also referred to "military potential," i.e. people who if needed could be mobilized for service in the wartime economy or armed services. P. V. Sokolov, "Ludskie resursy," in Grechko, *Sovetskaia Voennaia entsiklopediia*, vol. 5, 55-56.

constant hunger, cold, and dangerous working conditions. The tragic fate of Russian workers and farmers that is described by Zefirov and Degtev was not unique – Kazakhstan’s workers also suffered grievously from their integration into the Soviet war effort, and their living conditions and material situation grew even worse than during Stalin’s socialist offensive of the 1930s.¹⁵

From Raw Materials Base to Fortress of the Soviet Home Front: An Overview of Kazakhstan’s Economy Before and During the Great Patriotic War

The most visible manifestations of Stalin’s Socialist Offensive were the three Five-Year Plans implemented from 1928 to 1941. These comprehensive programs of industrial development placed Kazakhstan in an economically subservient position to the European parts of the Soviet Union as well as to the Urals and West Siberian regions. During the 1930s, Soviet economic planners prioritized the development of the industrial core in western Russia and eastern Ukraine and at the same time allocated substantial economic resources to building factories and metallurgical plants in the Urals and West Siberia.¹⁶ Whereas the primary role of the economic enterprises of the Urals and West Siberian regions was to provide the Soviet economic heartland with industrial products, the Soviet State Planning Committee (Gosplan) intended for Kazakhstan and the other Central Asians republics to supply food, oil, coal, and unprocessed metals to industrial cities in the Urals like Magnitogorsk and Sverdlovsk.¹⁷

¹⁵ In general, Western historians underestimate the extent to which the working and living conditions of Soviet workers and farmers deteriorated during the Great Patriotic War. Lewis Siegelbaum, for example, writes that “the extreme dearth of clothing, living space, medicines, household appliances, and many other rationed goods, the reliance on factory canteens, and kitchen gardens, the running down of transportation services [...] resembled the First Five-Year Plan period.” Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity*, 303-304. By 1941, Soviet citizens were certainly accustomed to extreme deprivation, but I contend that at least in the case of Kazakhstan, conditions during the war were worse than during the mid and late 1930s.

¹⁶ Harris, *The Great Urals*, 95, 133.

¹⁷ V. Z. Drobizhev, *Istoricheskaia geografiia SSSR* (Moscow, 1973), 295-298. It is important to note that Party and government officials in the Urals region had no direct authority over economic policies in Kazakhstan during the

In Kazakhstan, the major advocate of this economic policy was Kazakh Communist Party Secretary Filip Goloshchekin. In line with Stalinist economic policies, Goloshchekin sought to subordinate Kazakhstan's industrial and agricultural sectors to the economic needs of the Soviet Union's more industrially developed regions by transforming the republic into a supplier of raw materials.¹⁸ Smaghūl Saduaqasūly, an influential member of the Central Committee of the Kazakh Communist Party, became the most ardent critic of this program of economic development. Saduaqasūly did not dispute the need to integrate Kazakhstan into the broader Soviet economy, but he proposed that this could be accomplished in a more balanced manner by constructing an industrially developed economy in the republic. Saduaqasūly argued that by building machine construction, oil refinery, and light industrial factories in Kazakhstan, the republic would shed its status as an economically exploited periphery and instead provide valuable manufactured goods to the populations of Kazakhstan and other Soviet regions.

In response to Saduaqasūly's criticisms of the economic policies advocated by Goloshchekin and the Soviet leadership in Moscow, the Kazakh Communist Party General Secretary launched a vicious counterattack in the Party press where he accused Saduaqasūly of "national deviationism," i.e. attempting to separate Kazakhstan from the Soviet Union and create a "bourgeois" state.¹⁹ The charge of national deviationism was a gross distortion of the truth, but it served to delegitimize the attempts of Saduaqasūly and Goloshchekin's other opponents to secure a degree of economic autonomy for the republic. In the end, Saduaqasūly had little hope

1930s. The Soviet Sovnarkom and its economic organs, as well as the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, determined these policies. Harris, *The Great Urals* 136.

¹⁸ Kozybaev, *Istoriia Kazakhstana*, vol. 4, 335-339.

¹⁹ Alexandre A. Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *National Communism in the Soviet Union: A Revolutionary Strategy for the Colonial World* (Chicago, 1979), 92.

of implementing his economic plans because Goloshchekin had Stalin's full support.²⁰ As the 1930s progressed, Kazakhstan sent larger and larger amounts of food, oil, coal, metals, and cotton to the Urals and other Soviet regions, thereby emphasizing the republic's status as a raw materials base for the Soviet Union.²¹

The expansion of Kazakhstan's oil, coal, metallurgical, and transportation industries in line with the resolutions of the 16th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party decisively changed the republic's sociological composition by forcing Kazakhs to enter the industrial workforce in unprecedented numbers.²² There were only a few thousand Kazakh industrial workers during the first two decades of the twentieth century, but there were hundreds of thousands by 1941.²³ According to the official history of Kazakhstan published in 2010, the number of Kazakh industrial workers increased 8.7 times between 1929 and 1934 alone.²⁴ By 1936, Kazakh employees constituted over 75% of the workforces of many large-scale economic enterprises such as the Zhezqazghan Mine, the Emba Oil Trust, and the Qarsaqpai Copper Smelting Factory.²⁵ The majority of these Kazakhs arrived at these industrial sites from recently sedentarized *auls* and were less qualified than their Slavic coworkers for industrial occupations.

²⁰ Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, 212-215. Saduaqasūly died of an illness in Moscow in 1933. L. D. Degitaeva (ed.), *Narkomy Kazakhstana, 1920-1946: biograficheskii spravochnik* (Almaty, 2007), 293.

²¹ Kozybaev, *Istoriia Kazakhstana*, vol. 4, 339-347. The dramatic expansion of the republic's railroad network during the 1930s facilitated the movement of these economic products. These railroads connected industrial centers in Kazakhstan to each other and to cities in Russia. Abishev, *Kazakhstan v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine*, 12.

²² Abishev, *Kazakhstan v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine*, 10. The Five-Year Plans also dramatically increased the number of urban residents in Kazakhstan. From 1926 to 1939, the Kazakh Party and government oversaw the construction of 37 new cities in the republic and the proportion of urban residents increased from 8.2% to 27.7%. Kozybaev, *Istoriia Kazakhstana*, vol. 4, 375.

²³ *Ibid*, 336-337.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 384.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 389.

Enterprise managers often assigned these relatively unskilled Kazakhs to the most labor-intensive and least prestigious positions in factories, mines, and oilrigs.²⁶ During the 1930s, Soviet officials succeeded in integrating the Kazakhs into the Soviet economy, but this integration magnified existing socioeconomic differences between the republic's indigenous and Slavic populations.

The Nazi assault against the Soviet Union in June 1941 and the subsequent occupation of the country's key industrial and agricultural centers dramatically increased the economic importance of Kazakhstan and the other regions of the Soviet East.²⁷ Before the Nazi invasion, Soviet propagandists frequently trumpeted the Red Army's ability to rapidly bring any conflict to the aggressor's doorstep and destroy him in his own territory.²⁸ The stunning effectiveness of Operation Barbarossa during the summer and fall of 1941 shattered this idea and forced the GKO to organize a prolonged war of attrition. Stalin and the other GKO leaders were well aware that the state with the most productive home front would win the war. Before the Great Patriotic War, Soviet military strategists employed the term "home front" [*tyl*] to define the territories located a maximum of 400 kilometers away from an area of military operations. The total nature of the Great Patriotic War, however, necessitated a greatly expanded conceptualization of the Soviet home front. After June 1941, the Soviet leadership used the term to refer to every

²⁶ Ibid, 389-390.

²⁷ The Soviet territory occupied by the Germans by November 1941 contained 40% of the total population of the USSR and produced 63% of the country's coal, 68% of its cast-iron, 60% of its steel, and all of its aluminum. Voznesenskii, *Voennaia ekonomika SSSR v period Otechestvennoi voiny*, 110-112. During the war, Kazakhstan produced 85% of the lead, 30% of the copper, 65% of the metallurgical bismuth, and 70% of the polymetallic ores mined in the USSR during this period. Kozybaev, *Trud vo imia pobedy*, 173.

²⁸ For one of the most popular references to this doctrine, see the 1938 Mosfil'm production *If War Comes Tomorrow*, directed by Efim Dzigan.

territory under the control of the Soviet state, along with the vast complex of populations, economic enterprises, and infrastructure that supported the Red Army.²⁹

Kazakhstan became a vital part of this vast militarized complex. Alongside the expansion of the republic's coal and oil industries, in 1941-1943 the GKO ordered the evacuation of 150 factories and other economic enterprises to Kazakhstan from Soviet regions threatened by Nazi occupation.³⁰ Many of these factories produced armaments, clothing, and other industrial goods that Kazakhstan's native enterprises could not manufacture. In these evacuated factories, evacuated employees and Kazakhstani workers converted cotton, metal, and other raw materials into finished products – an unprecedented development in Kazakhstan's economic history.³¹ The intensified industrial activity of the Urals and West Siberian regions after June 1941 also prompted the GKO to focus special attention on the extraction of coal from the Qaraghanda basin. As early as August 1941, the Soviet Sovnarkom and Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party ordered the dramatic expansion of energy production in the Soviet Union's Eastern territories to compensate for the loss of Ukraine's Donbas region.³² Of the 41 coal mines slated to open in the Eastern regions of the Soviet Union during the 4th quarter of 1941 and in 1942, seven were in Qaraghanda province.³³ Guryev province also became a

²⁹ A. V. Shoshenko, *Bor'ba partii bol'shevikov za ukreplenie tyla v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny* (Alma-Ata, 1951), 3-4; I. M. Golushko, "Tyl vooruzhennykh sil SSSR v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny," in P. N. Pospelov (ed.), *Sovetskii tyl v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine* (Moscow, 1974) vol. 1, 49-51.

³⁰ Kozybaev, *Trud vo imia pobedy*, 43.

³¹ Ibid, 45-46. During the war, Kazakhstan produced 85% of the lead, 30% of the copper, 65% of the metallurgical bismuth, and 70% of the polymetallic ores mined in the USSR. All of these metals were vital for the production of armaments. Ibid, 173.

³² "V Sovnarkome SSSR i TsK VKP(b): O Voенно-khoziastvennom plane na IV kvartal 1941 g. i na 1942 g. po raionam Povolzh'ia, Urala, Zapadnoi Sibiri, Kazakhstan i Srednei Azii," August 16, 1942 in Pokrovskii, *Kazakhstan v period Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny Sovetskogo soiuz*, vol. 1, 62-65. See also A. Kiseleva, "Vse dlia fronta! Govoriat dokumenty," *Industrial'naiia Karaganda*, vol. 1 (206-207): (September 4-5, 1980).

critically important site of oil production during the war, especially when the Nazis cut off transportation routes from Baku and Grozny to the central regions of the Soviet Union from July 1942 to May 1944.³⁴

The Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union also had a dramatic impact on Kazakhstan's collective and state farms. The occupation of the Soviet Union's primary breadbasket in Ukraine from 1941 to 1944 made Kazakhstan's agricultural sector vital to the Soviet war effort. To compensate for the loss of Ukraine, the GKO ordered Ondasynov to intensify production on Kazakhstan's farms to satisfy the nutritional needs of the Red Army and the Soviet Union's laboring populations.³⁵ As a result, by April 1942 Kazakhstan had become the "most important livestock base of the Soviet Union" and an important supplier of grain, beets, and other food products.³⁶ In sum, during the first three years of the war, Kazakhstan went from being a peripheral producer of raw materials to a mighty base of the Soviet war effort with a greatly diversified economy and workforce.

On June 26, 1941, the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union ordered government officials in every Soviet region to implement "labor conscription" [*trudovaia povinnost'*] in order to maximize economic production during this period of national crisis. With this decree and the several others that followed it, the Communist Party and Soviet government brought the war into

³³ For the importance of the Karaganda Coal Basin in supplying the metallurgical factories of the Urals region with coking coal, see "Spravka o rabote ugol'noi promyshlennosti Kazakhstana za gody Otechestvennoi voiny," APRK f. 708, o. 9, d. 114, l. 4-6.

³⁴ Abishev, *Kazakhstan v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine*, 65-66.

³⁵ APRK f. 708, o. 6, d. 14, l. 3-10.

³⁶ "Iz stat'i predsedateliia SNK Kazakhskoi SSR N. Undasynova v gazete "Pravda" "Vazhneishaia zhivotnovodcheskaia baza strany," April 25, 1942, in Pokrovskii, *Kazakhstan v period Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny*, vol. 1, 111-112.

every factory and collective farm in the Soviet Union by establishing a militarized labor regime.³⁷ These regulations were extensions of the labor laws introduced by the Soviet government during the late 1930s that illegalized absenteeism and tardiness.³⁸ After June 22 1941, the GKO demanded even harsher punishments for workers and farmers who “deserted” from the labor front. Soviet procuracy courts, for example, often sentenced workers who missed their shifts or who failed to fulfill their onerous output norms to imprisonment in corrective-labor camps for seven years.³⁹

Stalin and the GKO directed the labor mobilization campaign in Kazakhstan, just as they did in every other Soviet region. The Committee for the Registration and Allocation of Labor Forces was another important organization that oversaw labor mobilization in the wartime Soviet Union. The Labor Committee operated under the purview of the Soviet Sovnarkom and coordinated the deployment of workers in the Soviet Union’s cities and countryside.⁴⁰ In practice, the Kazakh Communist Party and Kazakh Sovnarkom were responsible for day-to-day oversight over labor mobilization in their republic.⁴¹ The state of emergency declared in June 1941 prompted Kazakhstan’s leaders to mobilize Slavs and Kazakhs into the republic’s workforce on a massive scale. Manash Kozybaev estimates that from 1941 to 1945, Party and government officials in Kazakhstan mobilized 700,000 people for work in metallurgical, chemical, and other heavy industrial enterprises.⁴² The years 1941-1943 was the most intensive

³⁷ Zefirov, *Vse dlia fronta?* 298-301.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 298.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 317-322.

⁴⁰ Barber, *The Soviet Home Front*, 154-156.

⁴¹ Kozybaev, *Istoriia Kazakhstana*, vol. 4, 525-526.

period of labor mobilization in the republic. According to an internal statistical report compiled by the Kazakh Communist Party at the beginning of 1945, in 1941-1942 Soviet authorities mobilized almost 424,500 people for work in various economic enterprises such as light industrial factories, mines, and oil derricks.⁴³ When the number of rural inhabitants mobilized for labor on collective and state farms are considered, the total number of people mobilized for labor in wartime Kazakhstan easily exceeds two million.⁴⁴ The integration of the republic's workforce into the Soviet war economy was a herculean campaign, one without precedent in the history of the Kazakh steppe.⁴⁵

The conscription of Kazakhstan's Slavic and Kazakh men for frontline service forced the directors of the republic's Party and Sovnarkom, like Party and government officials throughout the Soviet Union, to mobilize the elderly, children under 16, women, and other people who Soviet authorities did not consider viable members of the labor force during peacetime.⁴⁶ Under the slogan: "The Motherland is in Danger. Men to the Front. Women to the factories!" the GKO

⁴² Kozybaev, *Trud vo imia pobedy*, 6.

⁴³ "Svedeniia o kolichestve mobilizovannykh ludskikh resursov v Krasnoi armii i promyshlennosti i postavlennykh material'nykh resursov Krasnoi armii za period s nachala Otechestvennoi voini po 1 ianvaria 1945 goda," APRK f. 708, o. 9, d. 135, l. 26.

⁴⁴ According to Soviet historian Tultai Balakaev, there were 491,200 labor-capable male collective farmers and 593,407 labor-capable female collective farms in Kazakhstan in January 1942. By the end of the war, the NKO conscripted most of these men into combat and labor units. Balakaev, *Kolkhoznoe krest'ianstvo Kazakhstana v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny*, 103-104.

⁴⁵ According to official sources, there were 6,809 collective farms in Kazakhstan in January 1942. Ibid.

⁴⁶ According to Balakaev, during the first two and half years of the war 6.1 million collective farmers entered the Red Army – two thirds of the male workforce of these collective farms. Balakaev estimates that in 1942 alone, military commissars in Kazakhstan conscripted about 2,155,000 collective farmers and sent them to the front. Ibid, 103-104. Soon after the beginning of the war, 1,162 elderly persons and 4,110 children began working on collective farms in Almaty Province alone. Abishev, *Kazakhstan v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine*, 30. Mark Harrison refers to the elderly, children, and women mobilized for labor during the war as "hidden unemployed." Barber, *The Soviet Home Front*, 145-146.

ordered local officials to recruit women for intensive labor.⁴⁷ For the first time, women predominated in the workforces of most factories and collective farms in the Soviet Union. According to the scholars John Barber and Mark Harrison, by 1943 53% of all Soviet workers employed in the Soviet Union's urban and rural economic enterprises were women.⁴⁸ Like in all major states that fought in World War II, these newly recruited female employees were integral to the functioning of the Soviet Union's economy and to the successful prosecution of the war effort.

Wartime employment patterns in Kazakhstan followed this general trend. In July 1941, Skvortsov ordered the directors of the republic's industrial enterprises to train 37,467 female workers to replace male employees departing for the front. Skvortsov's decree specified that enterprise directors were to concentrate on recruiting Kazakh women.⁴⁹ Concurrent with this decree, the Kazakh Sovnarkom and Kazakh Communist Party ordered the heads of all commissariats and other economic organizations in the republic to train 61,913 female tractor drivers, combine operators, and assistant agricultural specialists.⁵⁰ During the first several years of the war, Soviet leaders in Kazakhstan issued a bevy of additional directives to local Party and

⁴⁷ Richard Bidlack, "Workers at War: Factory Workers and Labor Policy in the Siege of Leningrad," *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies*, no. 902: (1991), 15.

⁴⁸ Barber, *The Soviet Home Front*, 94-99. According to Soviet sources, the proportion of women in the industrial workforces of all the Central Asian republics rose dramatically during the war. In Tashkent alone, more than 20,000 women began working in factories and other industrial enterprises in the initial months after the Nazi invasion. R. Kh. Aminova (ed.), *Istoriia Uzbekskoi SSR. V 4-kh t* (Tashkent, 1968) vol. 4, 80-81. In 1942, over 44% of all agricultural workers in Kyrgyzstan were women. K. K. Karakeev (ed.), *Istoriia Kirgizii* (Frunze, 1963), vol. 2, 501.

⁴⁹ "Iz postanovleniia biuro TsK KP(b) Kazakhstana 'Ob itogakh raboty respublikanskoi promyshlennosti za iun' mesiaty 1941 goda,'" July 7, 1941, APRK f. 708, o. 5, d. 31, l. 107-110 in Pokrovskii, *Kazakhstan v period Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny Sovetskogo soiuz*, vol. 1, 46-47

⁵⁰ "Iz postanovleniia SNK i TsK KP(b) Kazakhstana o meropriiatiakh po podgotovke kvalifitsirovannykh rabotnits-zhenshchin dlia raboty v promyshlennykh predpriiatiakh, uchrezhdeniakh i organizatsiakh respubliky, July 17, 1941, TsGARK f. 1137, o. 6, d. 73, l. 152-153. In *ibid*, 49-50.

government officials ordering them to mobilize women for labor in factories and on collective farms. For example, according to a June 1942 report from Head of the Personnel Sector of the Agricultural Section of the Kazakh Communist Party Shmel'kov to the Party Central Committee, local government officials in the countryside were training 55,306 mobilized women to become agricultural specialists, most of them as combine operators.⁵¹

It is difficult to verify whether Kazakhstan's party and government officials succeeded in mobilizing so many women into the industrial and agricultural workforces. The statistics presented in these Kazakh Communist Party documents are likely exaggerated, but the sheer number of orders signed by Skvortsov and Ondasynov related to the labor mobilization of women suggests that they genuinely sought to integrate as many women as possible into Kazakhstan's workforce.⁵² This is hardly surprising. During the war, the GKO put incessant pressure on the Kazakh Communist Party and Kazakh Sovnarkom to boost economic production, just as it did in the Urals, Siberia, the Volga Region, and the other Central Asian republics.⁵³ This pressure, combined with the departure of the majority of Kazakhstan's men for the front, accelerated the campaign to induct women, and especially Kazakh women, into the republic's economy. As a result, women became the main targets of the labor mobilization campaign in the

⁵¹ "Spravka sektora kadrov zemorganov TsK KP(b) Kazakhstana o podgotovke mekhanizatorskikh kadrov za pervyi god voiny po Narkomzemu Kazakhskoi SSR, June 25 1942, ARPK f. 708, o. 6, d. 167, l. 16. In *ibid*, 121. A June 12, 1942 resolution of the Kazakh Communist Party Central Committee ordered local soviets to train an additional 64,000 female workers for employment in industry and agriculture to replace workers conscripted into the army. According to this resolution, 40% of these women were to be Kazakh. According to Abishev, 34.5% of industrial workers in Kazakhstan were women by October 1941. Abishev, *Kazakhstan v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine*, 43.

⁵² Citing official sources, Gaziz Abishev writes that 45.2% of workers in Kazakhstan's factories consisted of women by October 10, 1942. This percentage was 30.2% in the republic's railroad industry and 29.5% in construction. Abishev, *Kazakhstan v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine*, 44.

⁵³ Iurii Aleksandrovich Gor'kov, *Gosudarstvennyi komitet oborony postanovliaet: 1941-1945: tsifry, dokumenty* (Moscow, 2002), 170-171.

republic and central to bureaucratic battles over who would control Kazakhstan's laboring populations.



Figure 11: A homemaker working in a tobacco factory in the city of Almaty, 1941. TsGAKZRK 2-5626. Women fulfilled a vital function in Kazakhstan's wartime economy by replacing male workers fighting at the front.



Figure 12: Elderly, female, and young citizens delivering grain to local government officials in Zhambyl Province, 1942. TsGAKZRK, 2-71264.

The Battle over Workers: Administrative Competition and External Labor Mobilization

The intensified focus on economic production that ensued during the war, coupled with the induction of a large number of previously unemployed people into Kazakhstan's economy, intensified bureaucratic conflicts in the republic to an unprecedented degree. Kazakhstan's Party and government organizations became important contenders in these conflicts, and this competition was one of the most visible consequences of the accelerated integration of the republic into the Soviet economy. From 1941 to 1945, the GKO and the Labor Committee assembled vast armies of workers in Kazakhstan and deployed these armies across the length and breadth of the republic and to other Soviet regions, much as Soviet authorities did in other

regions during this period.⁵⁴ As the war progressed, an increasingly wide array of government and Party organizations in Moscow and Kazakhstan became embroiled in contests over who would control these laboring armies.

It is important to note that the Great Patriotic War did not create administrative competition between central Soviet institutions and regional officials – it had been an integral component of the Soviet administrative and economic system since 1928. During the 1930s, economic planners in Moscow constantly issued unrealistic directives to local government officials to increase production. To have any hope of fulfilling these directives, local officials had little choice but to compete over workers, materials, and energy and hoard as many of these economic resources as possible.⁵⁵ The prewar Soviet economy never enjoyed the perfectly planned character that Stalinist authorities often trumpeted. This economy was anarchic at the same time that it was centrally directed because local economic bodies overcame scarcities and ensured fulfillment of the Soviet leadership's economic plans by maintaining a series of ad hoc and conflictual linkages with each other.⁵⁶

In his case study about labor mobilization in wartime Leningrad, Richard Bidlack draws several conclusions that are important for understanding the nature of bureaucratic contests in the wartime Soviet Union.⁵⁷ First, Bidlack argues that Stalin and other GKO leaders treated labor mobilization in regions like Leningrad as part of a much broader process linked to the Soviet war

⁵⁴ Lewis H. Siegelbaum and Leslie Page Moch, *Broad is My Native Land: Repertoires and Regimes of Migration in Russia's Twentieth Century* (Ithaca, 2014), 52-54.

⁵⁵ Vincent Barnett, *The Revolutionary Russian Economy, 1890-1940: Ideas, Debates, and Alternatives* (London, 2004), 117-118.

⁵⁶ Paul Gregory and Mark Harrison, "Allocation under Dictatorship: Research in Stalin's Archives," *Journal of Economic Literature*, vol. 43 (3): (2005), 721-761; Harris, *The Great Urals*, 123-145.

⁵⁷ Bidlack, "Workers at War," 902.

effort as a whole. This macroscopic perspective oftentimes had very negative effects on individual regions like Leningrad. For example, during the fall and winter of 1941, the GKO forced Leningrad's workers to labor intensively to supply war materials to Red Army units defending Moscow. In Bidlack's estimation, this was a counterproductive strategy because these weapons and ammunition did not significantly help the defenders of Moscow, but this matériel may have given Leningrad's defenders the ability to drive the Wehrmacht away from Lake Ladoga and ensure full-scale production in the city's defense factories. Bidlack maintains that by prioritizing the defense of Moscow over Leningrad and ignoring the defense needs of the latter, the GKO deprived the Soviet Union of Leningrad's industrial production and damaged the entire Soviet war effort.⁵⁸

Another important observation offered by Bidlack is that local Party and government leaders in besieged Leningrad developed a genuine capacity to innovate and alter their strategies of labor mobilization in response to changing local conditions.⁵⁹ For example, in May 1942 the Leningrad city soviet independently redirected 30,000 industrial workers to chop wood in the city's environs to prepare heating fuel for the coming winter. The city soviet's insistence on preparing for winter, even at the expense of curtailing industrial production, likely saved thousands of Leningraders from freezing to death.⁶⁰ For Bidlack, the ability of Leningrad's Party and government leaders to innovate in this manner was "fundamental to the city's survival."⁶¹ The Leningrad case demonstrates that the GKO was quick to ride roughshod over the defense and economic needs of individual Soviet regions to ensure the security and economic well-being

⁵⁸ Ibid, 36-37.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 37.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 27-28.

⁶¹ Ibid, 37.

of high-priority regions like Moscow. The nature of decision-making in wartime Leningrad also reveals, however, that local officials had the ability to develop labor-mobilization policies independently of the GKO in pursuit of local interests. In the case of Leningrad, these interests revolved around maintaining order in the city and ensuring that as many people as possible survived the Nazi siege.

Wartime labor mobilization in Kazakhstan gave birth to similar dynamics. Party and government officials in Moscow and Kazakhstan understood the imperatives of labor mobilization in the same basic way, but these authorities often disagreed about how to implement this process. Unlike Leningrad, the Nazis never separated Kazakhstan from the rest of the Soviet Union, and for this reason, the GKO and Labor Committee exerted greater control over labor mobilization in the Kazakh republic. This direct control, however, did not translate into the unfettered ability to direct labor flows. The Kazakh Communist Party and Kazakh Sovnarkom, along with Party and government officials in the republic's provinces, resisted the efforts of Moscow-based organizations to assert control over the republic's labor force by using many of the same "coping strategies" developed by regional officials during the 1930s. Most of these strategies involved "ignoring or passively resisting" central directives while shifting blame for economic and administrative failures onto rival institutions and regions, all while expressing ebullient enthusiasm about the "Central Committee Line."⁶²

During the war, external labor mobilizations were the most serious threat to Kazakhstan's local economic enterprises. These were attempts by all-Union organizations to mobilize the republic's laborers for work in Russia and other regions outside Kazakhstan. Rather than acting as "transmission belts" for the implementation of these external mobilizations, the republic's

⁶² Harris, *The Great Urals*, 156-163.

government and Party organizations continuously contested and subverted central directives in an effort to maintain control over “their” workers and keep them inside Kazakhstan.⁶³ This administrative competition exposed fissures in the Soviet chain of command and revealed the incompatible objectives of central and local Party-state organs.

The NKO versus the Kazakh Communist Party and Kazakh Government

The most serious bureaucratic conflict in wartime Kazakhstan was between the NKO and local Party organizations. The emergence of this conflict was not altogether surprising. As the economist Mark Harrison argues, there was no interconnected military-industrial complex in the Soviet Union during the Stalin period. From 1931 to 1941, the Soviet Communist Party prioritized the Red Army and the Soviet defense industry for the allocation of economic resources and workers. This was a logical component of the Communist Party’s campaign to expand the Soviet military in response to the Nazi and Japanese threats.⁶⁴ During the war, military and economic bureaucracies in the Soviet Union were less likely to collude than to compete in order to acquire scarce resources from the GKO and other central bodies.⁶⁵

During the war the NKO and its military commissars attempted to conscript as many of Kazakhstan’s Slavs, and after December 1941, Kazakhs as possible. The Central Committee of the Kazakh Communist Party and the Party’s Military Section, in contrast, sought to maintain a rough balance between the manpower needs of the NKO and the republic’s local economic

⁶³ According to the Communist Party’s official history, the role of all Soviet government organs was to act as “transmission belts” for implementing the will of the Party among the Soviet “masses”. TsK KPSS, *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks): Short Course* (Moscow, 1952), 237.

⁶⁴ See David R. Stone, *Hammer and Rifle: The Militarization of the Soviet Union, 1926-1933* (Lawrence, 2000), especially 184-209.

⁶⁵ Mark Harrison, “Soviet Industry and the Red Army under Stalin: A Military-Industrial Complex?” *Cahiers du monde russe*, vol. 44 (2/3): (2003), 323-342.

enterprises. During the first six months of the war, Skvortsov and Head of the Kazakh Party Military Section Petr Alekseev sought to satisfy the NKO's need for conscripts while ensuring that factories and collective farms did not lose so many employees as to imperil their ability to fulfill GKO production quotas. Balancing these two objectives, however, became increasingly difficult as time went on.

During the first several months of the war, military commissars conscripted large numbers of industrial and agricultural specialists in Kazakhstan without taking heed of the negative consequences for local economic enterprises. To provide just one example, in a report submitted in August 1941 by Head of the Military Section of the East-Kazakhstan Party Committee Kolmakov to Alekseev, Kolmakov complained that military commissars in Tavricheskii district had carelessly conscripted almost all the educated employees in many MTSs, pig farms, and government buildings.⁶⁶ According to Kolmakov, these military commissars had reneged on their duty to balance the NKO's manpower needs with those of local agricultural organizations and government institutions. Because the province's military commissars were clearly ignoring local personnel needs, Kolmakov beseeched Alekseev to intervene and stop them from causing further damage to the local agricultural campaign. In this district at least, the balance between local economic needs and the manpower needs of the NKO broke down almost immediately after the start of the war.

The geographic scope of the conflict between the NKO and Kazakhstan's local Party and government officials noticeably expanded during the next five months. An investigatory report sent by Head of the Pavlodar Provincial Party Committee Armenkov to Skvortsov maintained

⁶⁶ "Dokladnaia o mobilizatsionnoi gotovnosti Vostochno-kazakhstanskoi oblasti," August 21, 1941. APRK f. 708, o. 5/1, d. 1116, l. 89-94. For a similar report related to the excessive conscription of railroad workers, NKVD employees, and police in Almaty Province, see APRK f. 708, o. 5/1, d. 1108, l. 22-30.

that from June 22 to December 31, 1941, military commissars in the province had scrambled to conscript as many men as possible in preparation for the winter counteroffensive near Moscow and other Soviet regions. According to Armenkov, military commissars were still conscripting Slavic collective farmers, but they were concentrating on farms located near military commissariats in district centers and were leaving faraway farms untouched.⁶⁷ Armenkov claimed that this practice was generating a great deal of tension between district military commissars and district Party officials since the latter resented the fact that conscription was damaging local agricultural productivity by depleting the workforces of affected farms.

In Armenkov's estimation, it was obvious that military commissars were conscripting a disproportionate number of men from collective farms located near district centers because this was easier and faster than travelling to farms located deep inside the interior of Pavlodar Province. Armenkov surmised that if these military commissars had bothered to distribute the burden of conscription more evenly across the province's collective farms by conscripting a small number of farmers on several farms rather than a large number of farmers on a few farms, the military commissars could have filled their NKO conscription quotas while causing minimal damage to local agriculture. Armenkov claimed that these military commissars had instead chosen to wantonly ignoring the labor needs of these collective farms to make their own jobs easier.⁶⁸ During the first six months of the war, not even the mighty NKVD was safe from losing valuable personnel to military conscription. This problem became so severe that in November 1941 Alekseev issued a directive to the military sections of all provincial Party committees in

⁶⁷ "Itogavaia dokladnaia: O sostoianii mobilizatsionnoi raboty v Pavlodarskoi oblasti za 1941 god," January 12, 1942. APRK f. 708, o. 5/1, d. 1108, l. 13-18.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

Kazakhstan indicating that local military commissars were conscripting too many educated employees working in NKVD offices.⁶⁹ Alekseev reminded the heads of these military sections that they were supposed to block military commissars from conscripting NKVD employees without the express permission of the NKVD itself. From the perspective of the Kazakh Communist Party leadership, the overzealous conscription policies of the NKO had caused a manpower crisis in the republic that threatened to destabilize vital government and economic institutions.

Overall, during the first six months of the war the directors of local enterprises in Kazakhstan could do little to prevent the NKO from conscripting their employees. Their only recourse in this situation was to petition the Kazakh Communist Party and government for help. For example, in December 1941 construction neared completion on a 1,711 kilometer-long system of tunnel detours attaching the Turksib to Karanchi Station in South-Kazakhstan Province. Sometime during the fall of 1941, military commissars in Sairam district conscripted more than 60 construction workers, including a number of mechanics engaged in technically sophisticated rock face demolition. In a plaintive letter from Deputy Head of the Construction Project Kulikov to Alekseev, Kulikov claimed that the loss of these employees would force him to freeze all work on the tunnel system. In an effort to prevent this outcome, and likely to avoid having to explain his lack of progress to his superiors in the Soviet Commissariat of Ways and Means (NKPS), Kulikov asked Alekseev to convince the South-Kazakhstan provincial military commissar and the Sairam district military commissar to stop conscripting mechanics and return all conscripted workers to the construction site.⁷⁰ Besides petitioning Alekseev for assistance,

⁶⁹ APRK f. 708, o. 5/1, d. 1123, l. 8-12. November 17, 1941.

⁷⁰ APRK f. 708, o. 5/1, d. 1123, l. 158. December 20, 1941. This report does not indicate how Alekseev responded to Kulikov's request.

Kulikov had no other option to rectify his dire situation – he was completely dependent on the Military Section of the Kazakh Communist Party to advocate on his behalf.

As early as the beginning of 1942, the conscription practices of military commissars were having deleterious effects on Kazakhstan's industrial enterprises. In January 1942, Head of the Military Section of the Guryev Provincial Party Committee Kokhlachev sent an investigatory report to Alekseev criticizing local military commissars for conscripting technical specialists working in metallurgy factories and other industrial enterprises.⁷¹ Kokhlachev asserted that these military commissars were acting in a negligent manner because they could have satisfied their conscription quotas with rank-and-file workers while leaving technical specialists at their posts. This was very similar to the way that military commissars had conscripted collective farmers in Pavlodar province, suggesting that these kinds of unbalanced conscription practices continued to be the norm in Kazakhstan. In general, military commissars were not altogether concerned with the economic success of local industrial enterprises – to Kokhlachev's chagrin, their only objective was to single-mindedly conscript as many Slavs and Kazakhs as possible.

How did Kazakh Communist Party leaders like Skvortsov and Alekseev respond to the plaintive requests of their subordinates to prevent military commissars from conscripting too many farmers, skilled technical personnel, and government administrators? The archival record suggests that Skvortsov and Alekseev did attempt to reign in these military commissars by limiting the scope of conscription, but these attempts were largely ineffective. By the beginning of 1942, it was becoming increasingly clear that provincial Party officials and enterprise managers were on their own in their struggle to prevent the NKO from conscripting their employees. Although Moscow-based bodies like the GKO and the Central Committee of the

⁷¹ "Dokladnaia zapiska: Voennogo otdela obkoma KP(b)Kaz Gur'evskoi oblasti po mobilizatsionnoi rabote za period s 01.01.1941 to 01.01.1942," APRK f. 708, o. 5/1, d. 1115, l. 36-41.

Soviet Communist Party constantly asserted that boosting economic production in home front regions like Kazakhstan was just as important as mobilizing soldiers for the frontlines, in practice local military commissars had the institutional freedom to conscript whichever workers they chose. This suggests that the Soviet leadership in Moscow gave the NKO permission to prioritize military conscription over economic production in Kazakhstan and likely in other home front regions as well.

The inability of Skvortsov and Alekseev to prevent local military commissars from conscripting high-value civilian employees confused provincial Party officials, many of whom did not understand why these Party leaders were failing to advocate on their behalf. In January 1942, for instance, Head of the Military Section of the North-Kazakhstan Provincial Party Committee Chaiko sent a particularly indicative telegram to Alekseev requesting that he explain why he was permitting local military commissars to conscript large numbers of government administrators.⁷² In his telegram, Chaiko claimed that he was under the impression that the Kazakh Military Commissariat had expressly forbidden the conscription of these administrators, but military commissars were completely ignoring this directive and were sending these government workers to the front in large numbers. Chaiko averred that without these administrators, the provincial health care organization, the state farm trust, the provincial industrial union [*promsouz*], and other institutions would lack the qualified personnel they needed to continue operating. Chaiko clearly expected Alekseev and the Military Section of the Kazakh Communist Party to protect these government employees from conscription, and the Party's failure to do so gave military commissars de facto permission to run amok and snatch valuable government employees.

⁷² APRK f. 708, o. 5/1, d. 1108, l. 32. January 15, 1942.

In November 1942, Quartermaster Head of the Kazakh Military Commissariat Belukha initiated a new phase in the bureaucratic conflict over workers by issuing a provocative directive with the support of the NKO leadership in Moscow.⁷³ Belukha's directive specified that government soviets in Kazakhstan could not mobilize people for labor duty in factories and prevent local military commissars from conscripting these individuals into the army. This directive applied especially to individuals with technical training valuable to the Red Army such as drivers, shoemakers, repairpersons, and lathe operators. With this directive, Belukha was attempting to accomplish two interrelated objectives. First, he sought to prevent government soviets from blocking the conscription of individuals who were valuable to the local economy. Second, he was emphasizing that the republic's military commissars had the right to conscript highly qualified agricultural and industrial workers, regardless of the resultant damage to local economic enterprises.

Belukha's decree confirmed what many Party and soviet officials in Kazakhstan already knew: that they were at a distinct disadvantage when competing with local military commissars over workers. It is important to note that although these military commissars wielded a great deal of discretionary power in the contest over manpower, they did not have *carte blanche* to conscript whomever they wished. For example, in December 1942 Almaty Provincial Military Commissar Byshkin reminded local military commissars to conscript certain technical specialists in phases to give enterprise directors time to replace these employees with women and conscripts unsuitable for combat duty due to physical enfeeblement.⁷⁴ The workers elaborated by Byshkin all worked in industries vital to the war effort: ammunition, arms, aviation, coal, oil, non-ferrous

⁷³ "O poriadke otbora v/obiazannykh dlia raboty v promyshlennosti," November 24, 1942. APRK f. 708, o. 6, d. 2530, l. 71.

⁷⁴ APRK f. 8 (Almaty Provincial Party Committee), o. 6, d. 591, l. 263-265. December 26, 1942.

metallurgy, and electric power production. Notably, Byshkin's directive did not question the fundamental prerogative of these military commissars to conscript technical experts in these industries – his stated concern was to implement conscription in a more organized fashion in order to balance the manpower needs of the NKO with the employment needs of these critical industries. The fact that Byshkin had to issue this directive eighteen months after the beginning of the war, however, suggests that military commissars in the republic were continuing to conscript workers in a way that favored the NKO at the expense of local economic enterprises.

It was not until 1943 that Kazakh Communist Party leaders had some success in moderating the conscription practices of military commissars. Even at this point, however, the best Party officials could do was to delay the conscriptions of agricultural workers and employees in other economic sectors. For example, in March 1943 Second Secretary of the Kazakh Communist Party Zhūmabai Shayakhmetov entreated Commander of Troops of the Urals Military District Katkov to delay the mobilization of 200 military conscripts in Qostanai Province for work in industrial factories in the Urals.⁷⁵ In his telegram to Katkov, Shayakhmetov explained that these conscripts worked on local collective farms and their presence was vital for fulfilling agricultural quotas. According to Shayakhmetov, these collective farms were already experiencing a labor crisis, and the loss of 200 more farmhands would irreparably damage the upcoming spring sowing campaign. Shayakhmetov requested that Katkov delay the departure of these conscripts for two months – the projected timeframe for the completion of the spring sowing. Katkov agreed to Shayakhmetov's request, perhaps after intervention from the Soviet Communist Party or Sovnarkom.

⁷⁵ APRK f. 708, o. 7/1, d. 941, l. 12. March 11, 1943.

The case of the Qostanai collective farmers suggests that by the spring of 1943, Kazakh Communist Party leaders were capable of softening the negative economic impact of NKO conscription policies. In the spring of 1943, the NKO was still conscripting large numbers of people in most Soviet regions in preparation for the Red Army's upcoming summer counteroffensives.⁷⁶ However, after General Friedrich Paulus surrendered at Stalingrad in February 1943, the manpower requirements of the Red Army were slightly diminished. This gave Party officials and enterprise managers in Kazakhstan slightly more room to maneuver in their contest with the NKO. At the same time, during the final two years of the war the NKO began mobilizing Kazakhstan's laborers for work outside the republic. For this reason, local enterprise directors had to develop new tactics to prevent the NKO from conscripting their most valuable employees.

What did these new tactics consist of? In one particularly revealing case, Alekseev issued a report to the Central Committee of the Kazakh Communist Party in January 1943 indicating that the managers of industrial enterprises and construction sites throughout Kazakhstan were illegally obstructing the mobilization of their employees into NKO labor columns.⁷⁷ According to Alekseev, these managers were preventing their employees from leaving or arranging for their return from these labor columns by submitting forms claiming that these workers were sick or physically handicapped and thus not eligible for mobilization. Kazakh Communist Party investigators discovered, however, that the medical examinations needed to exempt people from mobilization into NKO labor columns never took place, and

⁷⁶ During this period, the manpower needs of the Red Army were so great that from 1943 to 1945 the NKO eased aged restrictions on conscription and began inducting conscripts under the age of 18 and over the age of 55 into frontline units. Glantz, *Colossus Reborn*, 540-541.

⁷⁷ APRK f. 708, o. 7/1, d. 930, l. 9. February 19, 1943. Based on the context of this report, it seems that these NKO labor columns were located in Kazakhstan.

doctors had not provided the requisite certificates of attestation. In response to this illicit practice, provincial military commissars deployed verification commissions to uncover dissimulators and send them to labor columns. Even Alekseev, a Party leader who generally supported local enterprise managers in their confrontations with the NKO, admitted that these managers had gone too far in deceiving the NKO in this manner.⁷⁸

These kinds of practices continued into 1944, prompting further censure on Alekseev's part. In the summer of 1944, the Aqmola Provincial Party Committee reported to Alekseev that military commissars in the province had attempted to conscript 481 people working in factories, mines, gold industry enterprises, construction columns, and railroads.⁷⁹ The NKO had earlier exempted these personnel from military service, but for an unspecified reason, military commissars now considered their conscription into the army to be necessary. According to this report, local enterprise directors "would not agree" to the conscription of these skilled workers. Craftily acting on their disagreement, these enterprise directors sent workers who were unproductive due to physical "enfeeblement" to the local military commissariat instead of the healthy employees that the NKO had demanded. There is little doubt that these military commissars were chagrined that they received the wrong conscripts and that they had to process individuals who were not physically suitable for frontline duty.

By 1945, more and more government officials in Kazakhstan were employing these strategies to prevent the NKO from mobilizing local workers. During the last several months of the war, local Party officials were also taking excessive liberties with NKO prohibitions against the mobilization of skilled workers. Semi-legal attempts to block the conscription of employees

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ "Dokladnaia ob itogakh mobilizovannoi raboty za 1-oe polugodie 1944 goda po Akmolinskoi oblasti," July 22, 1944. APRK f. 708, o. 8, d. 1608, l. 46-51.

became so endemic that they prompted a flurry of complaints from local military commissars and more interventions from the Military Section of the Kazakh Communist Party. A January 1945 letter of reprimand from Deputy Head of the Military Section of the Kazakh Communist Party A. Andreev to Head of the Military Section of the Taldyqorghana Provincial Party Committee Shamov revealed the extent of the problem.⁸⁰ According to Andreev, the provincial military commissar was complaining to him that district Party authorities were illegally inflating lists of exempted agricultural specialists to prevent the NKO from sending them to mine coal in Qaraghandy Province for the benefit of the army.

In Keerov district, for instance, local military commissars identified 449 people eligible for labor mobilization, but the district Party committee claimed that 214 of these individuals were exempt because they were agricultural specialists. Upon receiving an order to send the remaining 235 individuals to the military commissariat, the district Party committee and the district soviet expanded the list of exempted agricultural specialists to 327 by adding accountants, bookkeepers, herders, collective farmers, and other individuals employed in non-critical professions.⁸¹ In response to this and other violations of the NKO's mobilizational directives, Andreev called on Shamov to launch an investigation and identify any workers who Party and government officials had illegally exempted. It is entirely possible that Andreev was genuinely concerned about these illegal exemptions, but it seems equally possible that he was trying to prevent NKO officials from bringing their complaints to Moscow and requesting a Soviet Communist Party investigation of the Kazakh Communist Party's role in facilitating conscription. The Kazakh Communist Party had in effect become an intermediary in the

⁸⁰ APRK f. 708, o. 9, d. 1469, l. 3. January 5, 1945.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

bureaucratic struggle between the NKO and local officials. The Kazakh Party leadership had relatively little power to shape the outcome of these manpower contests, but these officials received much of the blame when one side lost personnel to the other.

NKO mobilization policies towards Kazakhstan's laboring populations and the responses of local Party officials and enterprise managers to these policies were manifestations of two interrelated wartime phenomena. The first was the attempt of Soviet leaders in Moscow to subordinate the republic's economy and workforce to institutions and regions they considered most critical to the war effort. The second phenomenon was the development of unofficial methods by the republic's local officials for combating this subordination and maintaining control over local workforces. These latter strategies were particularly important because Kazakhstan's Party and government officials employed them against powerful economic bodies in addition to the NKO.

Kazakhstan versus the Soviet Economic Commissariats

The NKO was not the only Moscow-based organization that asserted control over Kazakhstan's workers and collective farmers in order to integrate them into the Soviet Union's wartime economy. From 1941 to 1945, the GKO and economic commissariats operating under the purview of the Soviet Sovnarkom mobilized large numbers of "labor conscripts" in Kazakhstan for work in Russia and other Soviet regions. According to the Kazakhstani historian Kaidar Aldazhumanov, from June 1941 to May 1945 the GKO mobilized approximately 200,000 Kazakh labor conscripts for work in mines, factories, and construction sites in the Urals and

Siberia.⁸² Many of these Kazakhs were army conscripts considered physically unsuitable for combat duty or they were members of “hostile” classes ineligible for frontline service. In November 1942, in one of the largest mass labor mobilizations conducted in the region during the war, the GKO ordered the mobilization of 196,000 Central Asian military conscripts for work in a variety of industries located in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan.⁸³

Kazakhs mobilized for work in Russia and other regions experienced working and living conditions that were often poor and even life threatening. In December 1942, Procurator of the Kuzbass Mine Construction Trust Zakharov oversaw an investigation of conditions among Kazakhs mobilized for work in Siberia’s Kemerovo province. According to Zakharov’s subsequent report to Kemerovo Provincial Procurator Poludin, military commissars in Kazakhstan had erroneously told these conscripts that the NKO was sending them to fight at the front.⁸⁴ For this reason, these conscripts arrived at military commissariats dressed in summer clothes, believing that the army would supply them with appropriate winter attire. Upon arriving in Kemerovo province, local officials failed to provide these Kazakhs with warm clothing, leaving them fully exposed to the icy Siberian winter. As if the situation could not have been worse, Zakharov’s report revealed that military commissars had sent 47 Kazakh workers who

⁸² Aldazhumanov, “Trudarmeitsy Kazakhstana: Istoriia i sud’by,” in A. K. Kekilbaev (ed.), *Deportirovannye v Kazakhstan narody: vremia i sud’by* (Almaty, 1998), 320. Approximately 16,000 of these Kazakh labor conscripts worked in the Kuzbass Coal Basin and 4,000 worked in the Magnitogorsk Metallurgical Combine. “Spravka ob ustanovlenii postoiannoii sviazi i okazanie pomoshchi rabochim, mobilizovannym iz Kazakhstana na razlichnye predpriiatiia i stroiki Sovetskogo soiuza,” APRK f. 708, o. 7/1, d. 665, l. 5.

⁸³ The GKO mobilized the majority of these conscripts for work in mines and on construction sites. “Protokol #1 zasedaniia komissii GOKO po vydache nariadov na mobilizatsiu voennoobiazannykh v sredneaziatskikh respublikah dlia raboty v promyshlennosti i stroitel’stve zheleznykh dorog i promyshlennykh predpriatii,” GARF f. 9517 (Committee for the Registration and Distribution of Workers under the Soviet of People’s Commissars USSR), o. 1, d. 6, l. 1-3.

⁸⁴ APRK f. 708, o. 7/1, d. 665, l. 1-2. December 16, 1942.

were sick with tuberculosis or who were otherwise incapable of physical labor to work in the mines. According to Zakharov, these military commissars were solely concerned with fulfilling the GKO's quotas for coal production - they did not care if they destroyed the health of these labor conscripts in the process.

During the first six months of the war, Skvortsov and Ondasynov were generally unable to prevent Moscow-based organizations from mobilizing workers in Kazakhstan and exposing them to abysmal working conditions in Russia, even though they did try to reduce the flow of workers in this direction. Sometime before July 1941, Skvortsov and Ondasynov sent a telegram to the Labor Committee arguing that it should exempt Kazakhstan's workers from mobilization into factories in Russia that produced munitions and other defense-related manufactures.⁸⁵ In an attempt to rationalize their argument, Skvortsov and Ondasynov pointed out that during the immediate prewar years the Soviet Communist Party and Soviet Sovnarkom had sent thousands of workers from the Russian republic to Kazakhstan to facilitate the expansion of Kazakhstan's industry. According to the Kazakh republic leaders, it made little sense to send these workers back to Russia, especially since Kazakhstan's factories were experiencing acute labor shortages.

In response to this letter, Petr Moskatov, the head of the Main Administration of Labor Reserves, which was a section of the Labor Committee, penned a letter to Nikolai Voznesenskii, a key official inside the Soviet Sovnarkom in charge of the State Planning Committee (Gosplan). Moskatov's letter firmly rejected the arguments laid out by Skvortsov and Ondasynov.

According to Moskatov, Kazakhstan had "welcomed" 34,032 "labor-capable" evacuees from

⁸⁵ "Spravka o khode vypolneniia postanovleniia Gosudarstvennogo Komiteta Oborony o mobilizatsii zhenshchin v tylovye chasti i uchrezhdeniia VVS Krasnoi armii po sostoianiu na 07.05.1942," GARF f. 9517, o. 1, d. 10, l. 146-147.

June to October 1941, many of whom were skilled technical specialists.⁸⁶ Moskatov insisted that the ammunition factories of the Urals and West Siberian regions desperately needed these “extra” specialists to increase production, and the Labor Committee had every right to mobilize them and send them to work in these regions.

Voznesenskii agreed with Moskatov and confirmed the Labor Committee’s right to deploy these evacuated workers as its leaders saw fit. Although this exchange between Moskatov and Voznesenskii dealt exclusively with evacuated workers, it reflected a more general tendency that emerged during the first six months of the war. During this period, the Labor Committee tended to favor Moscow-based Party and government authorities over Kazakhstan’s officials in disputes over the allocation of workers. Because the Kazakh Communist Party and Kazakh Sovnarkom were so ineffective in protecting local economic enterprises from the all-Union economic commissariats, the directors of these enterprises had little choice but to develop their own strategies in order to maintain a semblance of control over their workforces. Obfuscation was one of the most effective of these strategies. In August 1942, Soviet Deputy Commissar of Ferrous Metallurgy Pavel Korobov sent a telegram to Skvortsov complaining about the obfuscatory practices of local enterprise managers in the republic.⁸⁷ During the winter of 1941-1942, the GKO mobilized 10 “worker columns” in Kazakhstan and sent them to work in metallurgical factories and mines in Magnitogorsk and other districts in Chelyabinsk Province. According to Korobov, around 3,000 of these mobilized workers fled

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ APRK f. 708, o. 7/1, d. 996, l. 259, August 30, 1942. Korobov does not indicate the number of workers in these columns. Upon arriving in Magnitogorsk, the NKO transferred these workers to the jurisdiction of the Magnitogorsk Construction Trust. This means that these workers were supposed to be permanent employees of the trust.

back to their home districts in Kazakhstan shortly after arriving, “causing great harm to this most important construction site of the ferrous metallurgy industry.”

Worried about the ability of these factories and mines to fulfill their GKO production norms in light of these unauthorized departures, Korobov sent lists of these “deserters” to the Kazakh procuracy so the police could threaten them with arrest if they did not return to their jobs in Chelyabinsk Province. In his letter, Korobov maintained that local procuracy officials in Kazakhstan were unable or unwilling to send these “shirkers” back to Chelyabinsk Province or punish them in any way. Magnitogorsk officials expressed further consternation when they learned that several enterprises in Kazakhstan had hired these “deserters,” in effect stealing their labor. Based on Korobov’s telegram, it is unclear whether procuracy and government officials in Kazakhstan deliberately ignored the requests of the Commissariat of Ferrous Metallurgy to return these workers to Chelyabinsk Province. Considering that these government officials had their own onerous production quotas to fulfill, however, it seems all too convenient that they simply failed to locate these runaway workers. It is more likely that these officials were deceiving Korobov to keep these “runaways” employed in Kazakhstan’s local enterprises in order to maintain a high level of economic productivity.

It is notable that Korobov’s telegram did not blame Skvortsov for the behavior of these local procuracy and government officials, which at a minimum violated Soviet laws concerning labor desertion. While Korobov implied that it was Skvortsov’s responsibility to facilitate the return of these “deserters,” Korobov did not make any concrete demands to Skvortsov to rectify the situation. This may have been a tacit acknowledgment on Korobov’s part that Skvortsov’s ability to influence the behavior of local government officials was very limited.⁸⁸ These local

⁸⁸ This *delo* does not contain a response from Skvortsov or additional telegrams from Korobov, so it is not clear how this issue was resolved or whether it was resolved at all.

officials had little official power compared to the Soviet Commissariat of Ferrous Metallurgy, but they succeeded nonetheless in deflecting Korobov's demands by sheltering these "escaped" workers.

During the war, Kazakhstan was not just a source of labor for economic enterprises in Russia; it was also a destination for workers redeployed from other Soviet regions by the all-Union economic commissariats. In general, these commissariats were only willing to deploy workers to Kazakhstan to reinforce industries critical to the war effort. In some cases, economic enterprises in the republic did not receive the workers promised by central organs, leading to serious production problems. In a particularly indicative case, in November 1942 the Soviet Commissariat of Oil approved a request from Skvortsov to transfer 5,000 workers from Baku to Guryev province to "strengthen the production base" of the Emba Oil Construction Trust.⁸⁹ This transfer was part of a comprehensive effort by the GKO to boost oil production in Guryev province after the Nazis bombed Grozny and cut off the transportation routes for Baku oil.⁹⁰ Despite the critical importance of Guryev province's oil fields in late 1942, directives from the GKO and the Soviet Commissariat of Oil to send workers to reinforce these oil derricks often failed to materialize. During the last several months of 1942, for example, the GKO ordered the Commissariat of Oil to send 4,117 workers from Grozny, Krasnodar, and Baku to Guryev province to reinforce the workforce of the oil industry there, but only 449 of these workers

⁸⁹ "Peredachi trestu "Tsentrpetsstroii" Narkomnefti promyslovogo stroitel'stva v Kazakhstanneftekombinate, postavlenno po predlozheniu sekretar' obkoma KP(b) Kazakhstana tov. Skvortsova," November 1, 1942. RGASPI f. 17, o. 2, d. 149, l. 158. According to the Kazakhstani historian L. N. Nursultanova, in 1940 the oil industry of Guryev Province consisted of 8 main enterprises employing 1,418 workers and 22 auxiliary enterprises employing 659 workers. Nursultanova, *Razvitie nefianoii promyshlennosti Kazakhstana v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny, 1941-1945* (Almaty, 2005), 68.

⁹⁰ Nursultanova, *Razvitie nefianoii promyshlennosti Kazakhstana v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny*, 67-79; Werth, *Russia at War, 1941-1945*, 621.

arrived by the end of the year.⁹¹ The situation in these oil enterprises hardly improved during the next eight months.

According to a telegram sent by Chairman of the Guryev Provincial Party Committee Bekzhanov to the GKO and Skvortsov in August 1943, the Soviet Commissariat of Oil was struggling to construct an oil pipeline connecting Guryev city to the island of Peshnoi, which was located just off the city's coast in the Caspian Sea. The GKO considered this pipeline vital for increasing the flow of oil from the region to the rest of the Soviet Union.⁹² Bekzhanov maintained that a lack of transportation, construction machinery, and basic tools was significantly delaying the completion of this project. Even more seriously, Bekzhanov claimed that there were virtually no engineering-technical specialists or other qualified workers employed on the construction site. In an effort to meet the labor requirements of the Peshnoi Pipeline, the GKO sent 700 Gulag prisoners to the site, but for some reason these inmates arrived very late and the Commissariat of Oil failed to supply them with lodgings and tools for at least four months.

It seems that not even officials who managed critical economic projects in Kazakhstan could count on the GKO and Soviet economic commissariats to provide the workers needed to expand production, forcing Kazakh Communist Party and enterprise managers to search for labor sources inside the republic. In the case of Guryev province, the region's economic importance to the GKO did not translate into the deployment of a sufficient number of workers to its oil enterprises from outside Kazakhstan. The GKO demanded that the Guryev oil enterprises completely subordinate their operations to the needs of the all-Union economy. When it came to

⁹¹ Nursultanova, *Razvitie nefianoi promyshlennosti Kazakhstana v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny*, 77.

⁹² RGASPI f. 17, o. 5, d. 149, l. 113-114. August 8, 1943.

expanding their workforce to accomplish this goal, however, the GKO expected these enterprises to accomplish this with very little outside help.⁹³ This case suggests that the economic relationship between Kazakhstan and the rest of the Soviet Union had become very uneven by the summer of 1942. The republic was supplying more and more raw products to the Soviet economy, but it was receiving few skilled workers in return.

There is little question that labor mobilization and the intensive integration of Kazakhstan's laboring populations into the Soviet economy amplified the overall control of the NKO and the Soviet economic commissariats over Kazakhstan's workers. Paradoxically, however, labor mobilization also forced local Party officials and enterprise managers to become more self-reliant than ever before and less dependent on the patronage of the Kazakh Communist Party and Kazakh Sovnarkom to maintain economic production. As the case of the evacuated light industrial factories will demonstrate, however, the changing economic priorities of the Soviet leadership in 1944-1945 meant that local officials in the republic still struggled mightily to retain control over their workforces as the war entered its terminal phase.

To-and-Fro: Labor Mobilization in the Evacuated Light Industrial Factories

The case of the light industrial factories evacuated to Kazakhstan sheds a great deal of light on how shifting fortunes on the frontlines changed the republic's position in the Soviet economy. This case also helps explain how the Soviet Union's overall strategic situation influenced local bureaucratic competition over workers. The GKO launched its ambitious

⁹³ This general procedure for completing large-scale economic projects was common throughout the wartime Soviet Union. For example, in November 1942 the GKO ordered the Uzbek Communist Party and Sovnarkom to build five hydroelectric power stations to boost the supply of energy to Uzbekistan's factories. Despite the fact that the GKO officially categorized these projects as of "primary, all-Union importance," it expected the Uzbek Party and government to find its own workers, construction materials, and transportation to complete the construction of these power stations. Aminova, *Istoriia Uzbekskoi SSSR*, vol. 4, 90-91.

program of industrial evacuation in order to save thousands of economic enterprises from destruction at the hands of the rapidly advancing Nazi forces. On June 24 1941, the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party and the Soviet Sovnarkom ordered the formation of the Soviet of Evacuation. Directed by Lazar Kaganovich, this body coordinated the evacuation of populations, economic enterprises, and Party-state institutions from the imperiled European regions of the Soviet Union to Eastern regions like Kazakhstan.⁹⁴ From June 1941 to the end of 1944, the GKO and the Soviet of Evacuation oversaw the disassembly of thousands of industrial enterprises and their reassembly in the Soviet East. According to several Western and Russian historians, the evacuation of these enterprises was a costly and time-consuming process, but it saved the Soviet war effort by establishing an industrial base safe from enemy attack and capable of producing munitions, clothing, and other essential items.⁹⁵ The Soviet of Evacuation sent approximately 220 factories, workshops, production cooperatives [*artely*], and industrial combines to Kazakhstan.⁹⁶ At least 22 of these enterprises were light industrial factories.⁹⁷

Like labor mobilization in the wartime Soviet Union as a whole, the evacuation of enterprises and workers to Kazakhstan proceeded in a haphazard and unpredictable manner. Thanks to the rapid advance of the Nazis, Soviet of Evacuation officials did not have the time to carefully plan every step of the evacuation process. The relocation of industrial workers from Moscow, Leningrad, Ukraine, and other Western regions often took place in cramped and

⁹⁴ G. A. Kumanev, *Rassekrechennye stranitsy istorii Vtoroi mirovoi voiny: tragediia i podvig* (Moscow, 2012), 257.

⁹⁵ Kumanev, *Rassekrechennye stranitsy istorii Vtoroi mirovoi voiny*, 255-271; Richard Overy, *Why the Allies Won* (London, 1995), 180-181. One of the best descriptions of the industrial evacuation process in the wartime Soviet Union remains Mark Harrison, *Soviet Planning in Peace and War* (Cambridge UK, 1985), 63-81.

⁹⁶ Kozybaev, *Trud vo imia pobedy*, 43-44.

⁹⁷ "Svedeniia o razmeshchenii evakuirovannykh predpriatii," No later than October 1941. GARF f. 6822 (Soviet of Evacuation), o. 1, d. 538, l. 1.

freezing freight wagons, and upon arrival local Party and government officials often struggled to locate premises appropriate for the reassembly of industrial equipment and the quartering of exhausted employees and dependents.⁹⁸

Because freight wagons were in short supply throughout the war, the Soviet of Evacuation could only send a small fraction of the employees working in enterprises slated for evacuation. For this reason, Soviet of Evacuation officials prioritized the most skilled employees for the trip east. Government officials in Kazakhstan such as Kazakh Commissar of Light Industry Āmir Erzhanov expressed hope that these arriving technical specialists would form the “backbone for the mass-training of [new] cadres,” in evacuated factories.⁹⁹ However, these enterprises often arrived in Kazakhstan with too few technical specialists to resume full-scale production or begin training new employees. For example, the 8th Kiev Shoe Factory arrived in Semei in August 1941 with only 90 engineering-technical workers, even though the factory required an additional 750-800 skilled workers to resume operations at a prewar level.¹⁰⁰ The Kharkiv Stocking Factory arrived in Shymkent in a similarly precarious situation, since only a few factory directors arrived with the enterprise in its new location - just one foreperson for every workshop in the factory.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ For a detailed description of the establishment of evacuated enterprises in Kazakhstan, see Kozybaev, *Trud vo imia pobedy*, 39-56.

⁹⁹ TsGARK f. 1488, o. 2, d. 294, l. 185. September 5, 1943.

¹⁰⁰ “Spravka o predpriiatiiakh Narkomlegproma KazSSR,” TsGARK f. 1488 (Ministry of Light Industry of the Kazakh SSR) o. 2, d. 89, l. 1-3. September 2, 1941.

¹⁰¹ TsGARK f. 1488, o. 2, d. 294, l. 161. October 25, 1943. Manash Kozybaev estimates that from 1941 to 1944, 50,000 qualified workers arrived in Kazakhstan together with their evacuated enterprises. Kozybaev, *Trud vo imia pobedy*, 72.

The leaders of the Soviet of Evacuation hoped that these specialists would impart their skills to newly recruited locals, in this way eliminating the need for larger redeployments of workers.¹⁰² A September 1942 report from representatives of the Soviet Commissariat of State Control, the chief inspection organ of the Soviet Union, elaborated this strategy for reconstituting the workforce of the evacuated factories.¹⁰³ This report remarked that a lack of qualified workers was significantly delaying the initiation of primary operations in the Ostashkov State Leather Factory after it arrived in Semei from Kalinin Province in September 1941.¹⁰⁴ According to these investigators, the situation in the factory was not ideal, but it was well under control because the Soviet of Evacuation transported a “control apparatus” consisting of experienced workers along with the factory. These experienced workers were training new employees recruited in Semei and were simultaneously installing machinery and producing leather goods. The Commissariat of State Control inspectors optimistically predicted that this “control apparatus” would eventually succeed in training a full-fledged workforce to work in the Ostashkov Factory.¹⁰⁵ The responsibilities of evacuated specialists were thus manifold and pressing. Torn from their native regions, the Soviet government expected these men and women to restore their factories to maximum operational efficiency while training hundreds if not thousands of new workers, all within the shortest possible timeframe.

¹⁰² Kozybaev, *Trud vo imia pobedy*, 72.

¹⁰³ “Ob’’iasnenie k aktu, sostavlennomu kontrolerami Narkomata gosudarstvennogo kontroliia SSSR tt. Lobakovym i Dainovskim, v rezul’tate proverki raboty Ostashkovskovo kozhzavoda NKLP SSSR,” September 18, 1942. GARF f. 8300 (Ministry of State Control USSR), o. 29, d, 2, l. 64-65.

¹⁰⁴ The Ostashkov Factory mainly produced leather outerwear. Kozybaev, *Trud vo imia pobedy*, 51-52.

¹⁰⁵ GARF f. 8300, o. 29, d, 2, l. 64-65.

The predictions of government officials concerning the resumption of operations in the evacuated light industrial factories often proved to be excessively optimistic. The managers of evacuated factories sometimes reported impressive successes in training new workers,¹⁰⁶ but all too often, evacuated specialists failed to train enough locals to ensure full-scale production. Finding and recruiting local workers proved to be a daunting challenge for the directors of these factories. As a result, the directors of Kazakhstan's evacuated light industrial factories became key contenders in the wartime contest over workers.

A report submitted by Director of the Industrial Section of the Kazakh Communist Party Vladislav Petrushko to Skvortsov highlighted the serious labor deficit in the republic's light industrial enterprises.¹⁰⁷ In his report, Petrushko noted that all textile factories evacuated to the republic in 1942 were still experienced a significant shortage of workhands in the first seven months of 1943. By July, only 3,821 out of the 4,771 employees envisioned by the Kazakh Communist Party's operational plan were working in these enterprises. The employment situation was similarly precarious in the Ostashkov Leather Factory. In a September 1942 telegram to Soviet Commissar of State Control Vasilii Popov, Head Engineer of the Ostashkov Factory Gorenburgov complained that the factory administration had based its 1942 nine-month operational plan on having a workforce of 770 employees, but by the end of September the

¹⁰⁶ For example, the manager of the Bolshevik of Ukraine Sewing Factory reported that factory forepersons trained 818 new workers in the two months after the enterprise arrived in Semei from Kharkiv. Similarly, the factory manager of the Azov Stocking Factory claimed to have trained 118 workers in the three months after the enterprise arrived in Semei. Factory training schools (FZO) played an important role in training many of these "worker-cadres", as did "Stakhanovite" workers who provided personal instruction to newly hired employees. A. A. Imanbaeva, "Soghys zhyldaryndaghy semeidegi evakuatsiialanghan kasiporyndaryng zhymysy," in Zh. Adilova (ed.), *Itogi i uroki Velikoi Pobedy nad fashistkoi Germaniei, mezhdunarodnaia nauchno-prakticheskaiia konferentsiia* (Semei, 2005), 173-181.

¹⁰⁷ "Spravka o rabote Narkomata teksil'noi promyshlennosti KazSSR za 7 mesiatsev 1943," APRK f. 708, o. 7/1, d. 984, l. 42-44. Petrushko was born in Tomsk Province in 1911. During the 1930s he held a number of prominent government and Party positions related to economic planning in East-Kazakhstan and Semei Provinces. Ashimbaev, *Kto est' kto v Kazakhstane*, 900-901.

factory only employed 365 workers.¹⁰⁸ Many of these 365 employees were only familiar with the most basic of manufacturing skills. In addition, the timetable for factory repairs assumed that 65 carpenters and 12-15 bricklayers would be working in the enterprise, but only 10-12 carpenters and 4-5 bricklayers were actually working in the factory as of September 1942. Gorenburgov, who was no doubt under intense pressure from the Commissariat of State Control to explain why the resumption of factory operations had been severely delayed, explained that the progress of manufacturing and repair work would continue to be unacceptable as long as this deficit of skilled labor persisted.

A lack of skilled labor, along with shortages of equipment and space, became the standard explanation for production shortfalls inside Kazakhstan's evacuated light industrial factories. Demin, the head of the Ostashkov Leather Factory, expressed frequent frustration at his inability to assemble a workforce large enough to resume pre-war production levels. The fact that this factory operated under the jurisdiction of the Soviet Commissariat of Light Industry and produced clothing for the Red Army did not seem to help Demin acquire the workers he needed. In an effort to defend himself from the criticisms of a group of Commissariat of State Control officials who inspected his factory from January to September 1942, Demin wrote an explanatory letter to the Soviet Commissariat of Light Industry.¹⁰⁹ According to Demin, there were simply not enough workhands in the factory to resume production according to the schedule of the Commissariat of Light Industry. In his letter, Demin noted that Deputy Soviet Commissar of Light Industry Kostenko had ordered the evacuation of workers from leather

¹⁰⁸ "Ob''iasnitel'naia zapiska k grafiku rabot po vosstanovleniu Ostashkovskogo kozhzavoda v g. Semipalatinsk," GARF f. 8300, o. 29, d. 2, l. 66. September 7, 1942.

¹⁰⁹ "Ob''iasnenie k aktu, sostavlennomu kontrolerami Narkomata Gosudarstvennogo Kontrol'naia Souza SSSR tt. Lobakovym i Dainovskim, v rezul'tate proverki raboty Ostashkovskogo kozhzavoda NKLP SSSR," *ibid.* l. 63. September 18, 1942. Demin did not specify the recipient of this letter within the Soviet Commissariat of Light Industry.

enterprises in the city of Leningrad to Semei to reinforce the workforce of the Ostashkov Factory, but for reasons unknown to Demin, these workers never arrived. Demin went on to remark that the Semei Provincial Party committee had repeatedly instructed local Party organizations to mobilize unemployed Komsomol members for work in the factory, but to no avail.

This was apparently only the beginning of Demin's struggle to find workers. Unable to count on the Semei Provincial Party committee to provide these employees, Demin directly petitioned the Soviet Commissariat of Light Industry for assistance.¹¹⁰ The Commissariat of Light Industry did indeed instruct the Semei Party committee and local government soviet to recruit unemployed city residents for work in the Ostashkov factory, but according to Demin, these organizations either ignored this directive or failed to examine it in a timely manner. By the time the city Party committee and city soviet attended to the matter, the managers of other industrial enterprises had already mobilized these unemployed residents for work. Becoming desperate, Demin requested that the commander of the SAVO send a battalion of worker-conscripts to the Ostashkov Factory, but he received no reply. Demin maintained that in the end, he stabilized the employment situation in the factory by recruiting a group of evacuees living in Semei. In addition, Demin somehow convinced the NKVD to transfer a substantial but unspecified number of prisoners to work in the Ostashkov factory from nearby labor colonies.¹¹¹

Demin's travails suggest that the directors of evacuated factories were at a disadvantage when they competed over workers in industrial cities like Semei. On the surface, it is surprising that Demin had so much trouble finding employees since he had powerful patrons inside the

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

Soviet Commissariat of Light Industry. Demin's connections to these Moscow-based officials, however, seemed to mean little in practice. Demin's letter suggests that he was an outsider in Semei who had few institutional or bureaucratic links to local Party and government officials. In the end, these local connections proved to be more important in the struggle for workers than the support of the Soviet Commissariat of Light Industry. Rather than acquiescing to the labor demands of Demin and the Commissariat of Light Industry, Party and government officials in Semei ignored their directives and allocated workers to indigenous enterprises headed by local managers, probably because they had strong bureaucratic and personal rapport with these local directors. Because of this local resistance, Demin had only one recourse to alleviate the labor crisis in his factory – exploiting the region's prisoner population.

Because of the constantly changing situation at the front, the employment situation in Kazakhstan's evacuated light industrial factories never fully stabilized during the war. Beginning in 1943, the GKO began the painstaking process of rebuilding the western regions of the Soviet Union after their liberation by the Red Army. In order to facilitate this economic reconstruction campaign, the Soviet economic commissariats began redeploying valuable industrial workers from Kazakhstan to the western Soviet Union.¹¹² Government officials in Kazakhstan initiated a series of countermoves in response to these redeployments in an effort to retain control over as many skilled factory workers as possible. In September 1943, for instance, Erzhanov sent a plaintive letter to Chairman of the Sovnarkom of the RSFSR Alexei Kosygin asking him to cancel the transfer of dozens of technical specialists and a large number of rank-and-file workers from cotton producing factories in Kazakhstan to cotton producing factories in

¹¹² For example, from 1943 to 1945 Soviet authorities deployed more than 3,000 graduates from labor-reserve training institutions in Kazakhstan to liberated Soviet regions to assist with economic rebuilding. Kozybaev, *Trud vo imia pobedy*, 75.

Moscow and Ukraine.¹¹³ According to Erzhanov, these technical specialists were the “backbone” [*kostiak*] of Kazakhstan’s cotton factories because they were the only people in the republic who could repair arriving equipment and train new employees. Erzhanov reminded Kosygin that there had been no industrial cotton specialists in Kazakhstan before the war, and the current workforce of these factories consisted entirely of evacuated workers. The upshot of Erzhanov’s letter was that redeploying these specialists to Moscow and Ukraine would irreparably damage Kazakhstan’s nascent cotton-producing industry and hamper the efforts of the Kazakh government to improve the dynamism and diversity of the republican economy.

Erzhanov’s efforts to prevent central government organizations from poaching technical specialists working in Kazakhstan’s evacuated light industrial factories continued into 1944. In a particularly revealing January 1944 letter to Ondasynov, Erzhanov forcefully accused the Soviet Commissariat of Light Industry of neglecting the labor needs of the cotton-manufacturing, hosiery, stocking, and mirror factories evacuated to Kazakhstan.¹¹⁴ According to Erzhanov, the Kazakh Commissariat of Light Industry had succeeded in restarting operations in these factories even though the Soviet Commissariat of Light Industry had redeployed about 70 technical specialists from these factories to Moscow and Ukraine from mid-1942 to the end of 1943. According to Erzhanov, these redeployments had damaged the operations of these factories in two major ways. First, these factories could not “function normally” without these specialists

¹¹³ TsGARK F. 1488, o. 2, d. 294, l. 185. September 5, 1943. Erzhanov’s letter to Kosygin does not specify exactly which organization was redeploying these technical specialists from Kazakhstan to Moscow and Ukraine. Based on his other letters in this *delo*, however, it is probable that he was referring to the Soviet Commissariat of Light Industry. Erzhanov was born in 1910 in an *aul* in Qostanai Province. After studying in the Kzyl-Orda Raw Materials Technical College and the Moscow Leather Raw Materials Technical College, Erzhanov became Chairman of the North-Kazakhstan Provincial Union of Industrial Cooperatives in 1937. From 1941 to 1943, he was Chairman of the Presidium of the Qostanai Provincial Union of Industrial Cooperatives. He served as Commissar and Minister of Light Industry of the Kazakh SSR from 1943 to 1948. Degitaeva, *Narkomy Kazakhstana*, 171.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, l. 64. January 31, 1944.

because they were the only ones capable of repairing equipment and doing other highly skilled work. Second, Erzhanov claimed that the redeployment of factory employees had engendered a “nervous mentality” [*nervoznoe sostoianie*] among remaining specialists because they knew that the Soviet Commissariat of Light Industry could order them to leave Kazakhstan at a moment’s notice and travel thousands of kilometers to Moscow or Ukraine with their families in tow. Desperate for some form of relief from these labor grabs, Erzhanov requested that Ondasynov convince the Soviet Commissariat of Light Industry to delay the departure of specialists working in these factories for at least two years. Erzhanov believed that this would be enough time for these specialists to finish installing newly arrived equipment and complete the training of newly recruited skilled workers.

The officials inside the Soviet Commissariat of Light Industry who ordered these redeployments were mostly interested in the economic reconstruction of the Soviet western regions, but Erzhanov’s objective was very different. In his exchanges with the Commissariat of Light Industry, the Kazakh commissar was concerned above all else with preserving the integrity of Kazakhstan’s cotton-producing industry. The leaders of the Soviet of Evacuation and the Soviet Commissariat of Light Industry saw the relocation of these cotton-producing factories as a temporary measure born of wartime necessity, but in his letters to Kosygin and Ondasynov, Erzhanov described these factories as important parts of his plan to diversify the republic’s economy and boost overall economic productivity. By attempting to preserve the position of these technical specialists inside the cotton-producing factories, Erzhanov was defending the prerogatives and economic integrity not only of the Kazakh Commissariat of Light Industry, but of Kazakhstan as a whole.

Erzhanov had good reason to be concerned about the fate of the republic's light industrial sector. Throughout 1944, the managers of evacuated light industrial factories in Kazakhstan constantly beseeched him to prevent the Soviet Commissariat of Light Industry and other Moscow-based government organs from summoning their employees to the western Soviet Union. In October 1944, for example, the director of the Shymkent Stocking Factory (originally the Kharkiv Stocking Factory) sent a frustrated letter to Erzhanov indicating that the factory had lost five highly qualified technical experts to the Red Army in 1943, even though these technicians were not legally subject to conscription because of their critical importance to factory production.¹¹⁵ Two of these specialists had been repairpersons in charge of maintaining fabric-producing devices – the most important machines in the stocking factory. In a practice that had become typical for Kazakhstan's economic enterprises, local military commissars were gravely threatening the productive capacity of the Shymkent Stocking Factory by conscripting its most valuable employees.

According to the factory director, the labor situation in his enterprise grew even worse after the establishment of a new stocking factory in Kharkiv sometime after October 1943.¹¹⁶ To facilitate the initiation of operations in this new factory, the Soviet Commissariat of Light Industry began ordering the management of the Shymkent Stocking Factory to send highly skilled personnel to Kharkiv. The Shymkent factory had already lost two production engineers [*inzhenery-tekhnologa*] and a highly qualified lathe-operator in this manner. Meanwhile, the Ukrainian Commissariat of Light Industry was petitioning the Soviet Commissariat of Light Industry to redeploy two production supervisors, a metal turner, and an electrical specialist from

¹¹⁵ TsGARK f. 1488, o. 2, d. 294, l. 161. October 25, 1943. The director of the Shymkent Stocking Factory did not indicate his or her name in this letter.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Shymkent to Kharkiv. The letter from the Shymkent factory director ominously warned that if Erzhanov allowed these specialists to depart, only a single qualified worker would remain in the factory. This would enormously damage production on the shop floor and eliminate the possibility of training new workers among the local population.¹¹⁷

Continuing his letter, the director of the Shymkent factory made a serious allegation. According to him or her, the directors of the Kharkiv Stocking Factory were taking unfair advantage of their influence inside the Soviet Commissariat of Light Industry to poach as many skilled workers as possible from the Shymkent Factory. As evidence, the letter claimed that former employees of the Shymkent Factory redeployed to Kharkiv had sent letters to their original place of employment unanimously indicating that the Kharkiv factory already had 10-12 forepersons familiar with manufacturing machinery. The letter pointed out to Erzhanov that it made far more sense to provide additional technical training to these forepersons to boost their qualifications instead of stealing specialists from the Shymkent factory. The Shymkent Stocking Factory manager urged Erzhanov to convince the Soviet Commissariat of Light Industry to refrain from redeploying “even a single specialist” from Kazakhstan to Ukraine in order to forestall the “total collapse” of the Shymkent factory.¹¹⁸

Since the director of the Shymkent Stocking Factory was attempting to curry support in his competition with the Kharkiv factory, the information presented in his or her letter to Erzhanov was obviously tendentious. Still, the letter points to a more general dynamic that framed the competition over labor in Kazakhstan and the rest of the Soviet Union during the last two years of the war. By allowing the directors of the Kharkiv Stocking Factory to take so many

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

skilled employees from the Shymkent factory, the Soviet Commissariat of Light Industry was indicating that it had definitively prioritized Ukraine and other western regions for the allocation of skilled labor. This priority was so entrenched that the directors of the Shymkent factory had little hope of challenging it directly. Instead, their strategy was to call for a more balanced allocation of labor that would satisfy the requirements of both factories. These directors knew that referring solely to the economic needs of the Shymkent factory and Kazakhstan would have likely led Soviet Commissariat of Light industry officials to ignore their request.

During the spring of 1944, the leaders of the Kazakh Commissariat of Light Industry were finding it increasingly difficult to prevent Moscow-based institutions from poaching skilled workers from the republic's evacuated factories. In an attempt to jumpstart production in these factories, officials within the Kazakh commissariat developed a new strategy for bolstering their workforces: petitioning government organizations in other Soviet regions to send technically skilled workers to Kazakhstan. In April 1944, for instance, Kazakh Deputy Commissar of Light Industry Vera Muraseeva sent a letter to the commander of the Red Army's 32nd Electric Geological Exploration Regiment asking him to send the soldier N. Driban to Kazakhstan to work as an industrial planner.¹¹⁹ According to Muraseeva, the Kazakh Commissariat of Light Industry desperately needed qualified industrial planners because the Soviet Commissariat of Light Industry had mobilized a large number of these specialists to help rebuild factories in the western Soviet Union. Because Driban had worked as a light industrial planner in Ukraine's Stalin province from 1936 to 1941, he was ideally suited to oversee the expansion of

¹¹⁹ TsGARK f. 1488, o. 2, d. 294, l. 14. April 15, 1944. Muraseeva was born in St. Petersburg in 1907. She received her technical training in Moscow and from 1939 to 1940 she was the director of the city's Factory #15. In 1940 the Commissariat of Light Industry transferred her to Almaty where she became the director of Sewing Factory #2. She was promoted to the position of Deputy Commissar of Light Industry of the Kazakh SSR in July 1943, a position she held until the commissariat relieved her of her position in August 1944 so she could attend to family duties. Degitaeva, *Narkomy Kazakhstana*, 243.

Kazakhstan's light industrial factories. Muraseeva concluded her letter by noting that because Kazakhstan's sewing factories were "exclusively devoted to fulfilling military orders" (probably uniforms), the military and the Kazakh Commissariat of Light Industry would both benefit from Driban's redeployment to Kazakhstan.¹²⁰

It was not coincidental that Muraseeva's letter highlighted the importance of these sewing factories to the Red Army – she was making it clear that employment problems in these enterprises would negatively affect the Soviet war effort as a whole and not just Kazakhstan. By the spring of 1944, the Kazakh Commissariat of Light Industry was at an increasingly disadvantageous position in the competition over skilled workers. Citing the labor needs of Kazakhstan's evacuated light industrial factories was not an effective strategy for officials like Erzhanov and Muraseeva because Moscow-based government organizations considered the economic vitality of these enterprises to be a low priority compared to the restoration of the Soviet Union's western territories. As their position within the Soviet Union's economic hierarchy worsened, officials within the Kazakh Commissariat of Light Industry increasingly framed their requests for additional workers by highlighting the importance of the republic's evacuated factories to organizations like the Red Army.

How did this bureaucratic competition affect individual workers in Kazakhstan's evacuated light industries? Because it was so difficult for the Kazakh Commissariat of Light Industry to reinforce the workforces of evacuated factories, commissariat officials were loath to approve requests from individual workers to leave their places of employment. By late 1943, the Soviet and Kazakh Commissariats of Light Industry were receiving a large number of petitions

¹²⁰ Whereas cotton-spinning factories produced fabrics, sewing factories transformed these fabrics into clothing. Muraseeva does not elaborate why Drabin in particular was so crucial to the operations of the Kazakh Commissariat of Light Industry. There is no document in this *delo* indicating whether Drabin actually went to Kazakhstan.

to relocate employees, often written by the immediate relatives of workers evacuated to Kazakhstan. These petitioners employed a variety of rhetorical strategies to reunite their families. For example, in December 1943 the brother of Antonina and Anna Fedulova, two workers evacuated with the Red Dawn Textile Factory from the city of Kemerovo to South-Kazakhstan Province, sent a petition all the way up to Soviet Commissar of Light Industry Sergei Lukin requesting that he send his sisters back to their home city.¹²¹ In a beseeching tone, Fedulov wrote that he had been attempting to reunite his family for a year and a half, and although the director of the Red Dawn Factory had assented to this request three times, he or she had never provided official permission for his sisters to leave the factory.

Familial sentiment was not Fedulov's only motivator; Anna's very life was at stake. According to Fedulov's letter, Anna was no longer capable of working in the Red Dawn Factory due to a severe heart condition and circulation problems. Upon learning that Anna's condition was worsening, Fedulov sent an additional, revised petition to Lukin requesting that he send her home.¹²² Fedulov argued that relocating Anna from Kazakhstan to Kemerovo would not just save her life - it would also allow her to recover her capacity for work and leave the state pension registry. In any case, Fedulov reasonably asserted that the Red Dawn Factory would not suffer unduly from losing a single invalid worker. Fedulov concluded his letter by remarking that once Anna returned home he would "stop worrying so much" and be able to concentrate on his own work as an engineer in a Kemerovo ammunition factory.¹²³

¹²¹ TsGARK f. 1488, o. 2, d. 294, l. 101-102. December 15, 1943. For a brief history of the Red Dawn Factory, see "Proizvodstvennoe ob'edinenie Krasnaia poliana: Istoriia kompanii," <http://pryaja.com/history/>, last accessed on September 14, 2013. The Soviet Commissariat of Light Industry ordered the return of the Red Dawn Factory to Kemerovo sometime before the end of the war. Kozybaev, *Trud vo imia pobedy*, 43-44.

¹²² TsGARK f. 1488, o. 2, d. 294, l. 101-102.

¹²³ There is no document in this *delo* indicating whether Lukin granted Fedulov's request.

Fedulov's primary motivation for petitioning Lukin was almost certainly to save the life of his sick sister, but the concerned brother knew that he needed to frame his request with the language of economic production to convince Lukin to send her to Kemerovo. Another strategy followed by petitioners attempting to reunite families torn asunder by evacuation was to highlight their status as frontline veterans. In February 1944, for instance, the Personnel [*kadry*] Section of the Soviet Commissariat of Light Industry forwarded a letter to Erzhanov from a certain A. I. Stroganov – the father of two women evacuated to South-Kazakhstan Province with the Moscow Red Dawn Factory.¹²⁴ According to Stroganov, the army discharged him in 1943 after he was wounded at the front. Upon returning to his native Tula Province, Stroganov discovered that German troops had burned down his home and destroyed his livestock. To make matters worse, Stroganov's wife became seriously ill and the penurious couple were responsible for caring for their 14-year old son. Emphasizing his veteran status and the fact that he had “lost his health for the sake of the Motherland,” Stroganov requested that Erzhanov intervene on his behalf to convince the manager of the Red Dawn Factory to relieve his daughters from their positions and send them to Tula Province to assist in restoring the family's ruined farmstead.¹²⁵

The individuals who penned these letters may have understood the strategic necessity of evacuating their relatives to Kazakhstan, but these relocations often left those remaining behind in crisis. After the liberation of the Soviet Union's western regions, these workers saw a chance to restore their families to a state of normalcy and took advantage of it. The Soviet leadership had designed the evacuation of technical personnel to the Soviet East to be a necessary but

¹²⁴ TsGARK f. 1488, o. 2, d. 294, l. 71-72. February 18, 1944. The fact that the Commissariat of Light Industry forwarded this letter to Erzhanov implies that he had the final say over whether to grant Stroganov's request.

¹²⁵ Stroganov also rationalized his request by mentioning that his son and wife were legal dependents of his daughters because they had jobs and he did not.

temporary expedient aimed at facilitating wartime production, but the expulsion of Nazi troops from the Soviet Union in 1944 allowed the Soviet state to concentrate on the reconstruction of the country's economic core: Russia, Ukraine, and other western regions. This economic reprioritization prompted these authorities to syphon more and more technical specialists from Kazakhstan and other eastern regions to the western Soviet Union.

The leaders of the Kazakh Commissariat of Light Industry and the directors of the republic's evacuated enterprises did not accept the changing policies of the Soviet leadership lying down. These Kazakhstan-based officials hoped that the industrial evacuations of 1941 to 1943 would diversify the republic's economy and boost long-term economic production, and they fought to keep industrial specialists inside Kazakhstan to facilitate these goals. By 1943-1944, however, these efforts had become less and less effective. This was because Moscow had made a clear-cut decision regarding the allocation of industrial workers to the western Soviet Union. Central government bodies like the Soviet Commissariat of Light Industry tenaciously adhered to this decision, and these organs paid little attention to the negative consequences for individual workers. As the next section argues, indifference to the fate of these evacuated men and women was symptomatic of a more general deterioration of living conditions for Kazakhstan's industrial workers and collective farmers during the war.

“They Have Entered a Hopeless State”: Internal Labor Mobilization and Living Conditions in Kazakhstan

The previous sections of this chapter argued that the labor mobilization policies of the NKO and Soviet economic commissariats depleted Kazakhstan's agricultural and industrial workforces. Soviet leaders in Moscow were aware of the labor crisis engulfing the republic, but they still expected Kazakhstan's economic enterprises to maintain a high level of productivity in

order to support the war effort. Unsurprisingly, these demands placed the republic's Party and government officials in an extremely difficult position since local enterprises often lacked the workers to ensure the timely delivery of arms, energy, and food to the army and other vital institutions. The leaders of the Kazakh Communist Party and Kazakh Sovnarkom responded to the labor crisis by initiating a series of large-scale internal mobilizations designed to integrate every able-bodied man, woman, and child into the republic's wartime economy.

These kinds of internal labor mobilizations were not a new phenomenon in Soviet Central Asia. For example, from 1925 to 1940 Soviet authorities forcefully resettled more than 48,000 households from the mountainous northern regions of Tajikistan to the republic's lowland provinces along the Afghan border. According to the historian of Central Asia Batokoz Kassymbekova, the Tajik Communist Party and Tajik government designed these population movements to facilitate cotton cultivation in the lowlands, displace unreliable Uzbek nomads, and increase contacts between Soviet Tajiks and Persian speakers in Afghanistan and Iran in order to convince the latter groups to accept Soviet power.¹²⁶ The imperatives of total mobilization during the Great Patriotic War intensified the propensity of Soviet authorities in Moscow and Central Asia to implement mass population movements in pursuit of the Stalinist goal of ensuring the "rational distribution of population."¹²⁷ In the case of wartime Kazakhstan, the primary rationale behind these movements was to boost industrial and agricultural production to support the Soviet war effort.

¹²⁶ Botakoz Kassymbekova, "Humans as Territory: Forced Resettlement and the Making of Soviet Tajikistan, 1920-38," *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 30 (3-4): (2011), 349-370.

¹²⁷ Siegelbaum, *Broad is My Native Land*, 3.

In April 1942, the Soviet Communist Party and the Soviet Sovnarkom ordered local Party and government officials throughout the Soviet Union to begin mobilizing unemployed men, women, and children living in cities for work on collective and state farms. Many of these newly recruited farmers were the dependents of industrial workers.¹²⁸ The decision to deploy these urban inhabitants to the countryside strongly suggests that military conscription during the first year of the war seriously depleted the workforce of the Soviet Union's agricultural sector.¹²⁹ In the spring of 1942, local Party and government officials in Kazakhstan also began mobilizing rural inhabitants for agricultural work. In one indicative case, in March 1942 Commissar of the Forestry Industry of the Kazakh SSR Ótegen Zhanzaqov ordered the directors of forestry enterprises (mechanical forestry points, timber industry enterprises [*lespromkhozy*], and forestry stations [*leskhozy*]) to send special brigades consisting of the non-working family members of forestry employees to work on nearby collective and state farms.¹³⁰ Zhanzaqov took this directive quite seriously, warning the directors of forestry enterprises that if they failed to mobilize these dependents in support of the spring sowing campaign, he would ensure that local procuracies criminally prosecuted them.

These labor flows did not go solely from Kazakhstan's cities and rural economic enterprises to the republic's collective farms. Throughout the war, Party and government

¹²⁸ Aminova, *Istoriia Uzbekskoi SSR*, 111. For the mobilization of unemployed people in the wartime Soviet Union more generally, see Barber, *The Soviet Home Front*, 149-153.

¹²⁹ In Uzbekistan, for example, the number of machine operators [*mekhanizatory*] and combine operators working on collective farms fell from 27,900 in 1941 to 2,800 in 1942, thanks largely to conscription. Aminova, *Istoriia Uzbekskoi SSR*, 102. By early 1942, as many as 500,000 urban residents in Uzbekistan were working on collective farms. *Ibid*, 111.

¹³⁰ "O pomoshchi predpriatii Narkomata lesnoi promyshlennosti KazSSR v provedenii vesennei posevnoi kampanii kolkhozam, sovkhozam i MTS," 3/11/1942. TsGARK f. 1463 (Commissariat of the Forest Industry of the Kazakh SSR), o. 1, d. 156, l. 99-100. Zhanzaqov left his post as Commissar of Forestry of the Kazakh SSR in August 1942. Degitaeva, *Narkomy Kazakhstana, 1920-1946 gg*, 136.

officials also mobilized collective farmers for work in the forestry, coal, and metallurgy industries. To provide just one example of this phenomenon, in November 1942 the GKO ordered the Kazakh Communist Party and Kazakh Sovnarkom to mobilize collective farmers for heavy lumberjacking work in locations where the Soviet and Kazakh Commissariats of Forestry required additional workhands. Mobilizing these hungry and exhausted collective farmers for strenuous work in the republic's forests proved to be far easier in theory than in practice. In March 1943, Ondasynov sent a highly critical telegram to the East-Kazakhstan, Almaty, and Zhambyl provincial soviets for incompetently overseeing the implementation of this mobilizational decree.¹³¹ According to Ondasynov, these soviets had failed to mobilize collective farmers in the time frame specified by the GKO, delaying the fulfillment of the lumber quota by 45 days. In a number of districts, village soviets had not even bothered to notify collective farmers that the GKO had mobilized them for forestry work, resulting in widespread absenteeism and major production shortfalls.

Out of all the problems elaborated in Ondasynov's report, the most serious was that many of these mobilized farmers were departing their forest work zones without authorization. According to Ondasynov, 150 collective farmers in the Koskuduk Mechanical Forestry Point in Zhambyl province left their assigned work areas after less than a month of work. Ondasynov placed most of the blame for this flight squarely on the shoulders of the Kazakh Commissariat of Forestry and local soviet officials. In his estimation, collective farmers were fleeing the forests in droves because local officials were unwilling or unable to provide them with feed for the farm animals the mobilized farmers brought with them from collective farms to haul wood.

¹³¹ "Postanovlenie SNK KazSSR: O khode vypolneniia postanovleniia GKO ot 01.11.1942 i SNK i TsK KP(b)Kazakhstana ot 12.11.1942 o lesozagotovkakh v osenne-zimnii sezon 1942-1943". TsGARK f. 1463, o. 1, d. 170, l. 14-17.

Ondasynov remarked that in order to prevent their animals from starving, many of these collective farmers had little choice but to abandon their lumberjacking work and return to their farms.

Ondasynov's telegram went on to claim that Kazakh Commissariat of Forestry managers and soviet officials were caring for these mobilized collective farmers in such an irresponsible way that their behavior "bordered on the criminal." More specifically, Ondasynov lambasted these local officials for mobilizing pregnant women, mentally ill people, and young children for heavy lumberjacking work. The frenetic drive to mobilize workers at any cost was clearly having a very negative impact on Kazakhstan's civilian population, and the overzealousness and ruthlessness of Party and government authorities often imperiled the lives of mobilized workers. Ondasynov was quick to blame local officials for being overzealous in mobilizing local collective farmers for work in forestry points, but by demanding the strict fulfillment of this GKO decree, he made it very likely that these officials would take extreme measures to boost production such as mobilizing dependents and handicapped people.

It seems likely that Ondasynov was scapegoating these local officials for their "criminal" mistreatment of these dependents in order accomplish two interrelated institutional and personal goals. First, he sought to demonstrate to the GKO that he was earnest about fulfilling its directive. Second, he was attempting to avoid responsibility for the negative effects of this directive on Kazakhstan's local populations. Ondasynov did express some sympathy towards these mobilized dependents, but it seems likely that his primary concerns were to ensure a high-level of production in these forestry enterprises while avoiding possible censure from Moscow. At the end of his telegram, Ondasynov instructed local procuracy officials to prosecute all collective farmers who fled the forestry points as "deserters," "disorganizers of production," and

“saboteurs of this GKO decree.” The major onus for production shortfalls in these forestry points ultimately fell on the mobilized collective farmers. These farmers could take matters into their own hands by fleeing the forests, but at the end of the day, they were pawns in a ruthless political game between the GKO and Ondasynov.

Despite their distance from the frontlines, as early as 1942 Kazakhstan’s civilians were suffering dearly from their mobilization into the Soviet labor front. As the war progressed, “labor desertion” became an increasingly common response to appalling working conditions in the republic’s economic enterprises. Like in Russia, Party and government officials in Kazakhstan responded to “labor desertion” with large-scale repression. Threats of arrest became integral to the labor mobilization process in Kazakhstan. The Almaty City Party Committee’s plan to mobilize 26,280 office workers and people under 16 for auxiliary work on nearby collective and state farms in May 1942 illustrates the close connection between labor mobilization and repression. Despite the importance of this plan for fulfilling local agricultural quotas, the July 1942 plenum of the Party committee noted that local officials had only succeeded in mobilizing 10,876 city residents.¹³² The plenum cited two major reasons for this failure: the ineffective organizational preparation of the city Party organization and individual “shirking” on the part of mobilized workers.¹³³ In order to combat the latter phenomenon, the city Party Committee demanded enforcement of the Soviet Union’s militarized labor regime and ordered local police to investigate individuals suspected of “disorganizing this most important administrative-political and defense-related measure.” The plenum urged the police to prosecute

¹³² “Zadachi Alma-Atinskoi gorodskoi partiinoi organizatsii po okazaniu pomoshchii sel’skomu khoziaistvu,” APRK f. 412 (Alma-Ata City Party Committee), o. 28, d. 9, l. 149-154.

¹³³ The only people specifically exempted in this mobilizational decree were workers in industry and in transportation.

these “shirkers” as saboteurs, a crime that demanded a minimum sentence of several years in a Gulag corrective-labor camp.



Figure 13: Police employees working the field as auxiliary farmers in Almaty Province, 1941. TsGAKZRK, 2-7225. Party-state authorities in Kazakhstan commonly responded to labor shortfalls on collective farms by redeploying urban inhabitants to rural areas.

These threats of punishment were necessary because living conditions in Kazakhstan’s countryside deteriorated dramatically during the war, and it is likely that many people mobilized from cities sought to avoid relocation to the countryside by any means possible. The onset of starvation on the republic’s collective farms almost certainly encouraged attempts to avoid mobilization for agricultural work. When the war began, Kazakhstan’s workers were already accustomed to hunger. During the 1930s, government economic planners in Moscow concentrated on expanding the republic’s industrial sector at the expense of food products and

other basic goods such as clothing and heating fuel. Workers and farmers who were not part of the Party-state nomenklatura had no choice but to compete for these basic commodities, leading to chronic profiteering and shortages.¹³⁴ After the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan's food supply problems grew far worse thanks to the conscription of the majority of the republic's male collective farmers. In these crisis conditions, patriotic fervor was not enough to maintain a level of productivity on collective farms high enough to feed the republic's population.

Top-secret Kazakh NKVD and Kazakh Communist Party reports indicate that widespread starvation hit the republic's collective farms no later than the spring of 1943. An April 1943 investigatory report from Deputy Kazakh NKVD Commissar Nikolai Bogdanov to Beria indicated that government soviets throughout Kazakhstan's countryside were failing to meet the nutritional needs of collective farmers.¹³⁵ In his report, Bogdanov matter-of-factly pointed out that family members of Red Army soldiers were starving and were resorting to eating dogs, cats, carrion, and offal.¹³⁶ On 23 collective farms in East-Kazakhstan Province, NKVD investigators discovered 110 military families who had received no food from the local government soviet for an "extended period."¹³⁷ As a result, children in these families had "entered a hopeless state" [*ν beznadezhnom sostoianii*], meaning that they were doomed to die from malnutrition.

¹³⁴ For profiteering and shortages in the Soviet Union in general, see Lewis Siegelbaum and Andrei Sokolov, *Stalinism as a Way of Life: A Narrative in Documents* (New Haven, 2000), 255-259.

¹³⁵ "Dokladnaia zapiska narkoma NKVD Kazakhskoi SSR N. K. Bogdanova – narkomu NKVD L. P. Berii," April 8, 1944. GARF f. 9401 (Ministry of Internal Affairs USSR), o. 2, d. 64, l. 270-277, in *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, vol. 1: (2009), 46-51.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 47-48.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 48.

Bogdanov's report also highlighted several cases of local officials neglecting the needs of Kazakh military families. In January 1943, the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party and the Soviet Sovnarkom officially declared the immediate family members of Red Army soldiers to be a privileged group entitled to extra food and preferential access to living space.¹³⁸ Bogdanov's report, however, supports the historian Rebecca Manley's contention that the "hierarchy of entitlement established by central and regional directives [in the Soviet Union]" often existed only on paper.¹³⁹ According to Manley, this "hierarchy of entitlement" was often illusory because Party and government officials in cities like Tashkent and Odessa often engaged in corrupt or anti-Semitic practices such as accepting payment to provide housing to civilians instead of military families or barring the families of Jewish soldiers from renting apartments.¹⁴⁰ It seems that similar acts of malfeasance were common in wartime Kazakhstan, and Kazakhs often bore the brunt of this discrimination.

According to Bogdanov's report to Beria, district government officials throughout Kazakhstan were treating the needy family members of Red Army soldiers in a criminally neglectful manner. For example, in the settlement of Tauchuk in Guryev Province, the mother of a frontline soldier named Arystanova starved to death after the district soviet failed to give her the extra food she was entitled to as the immediate family member of a service member.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ On January 22, 1943, the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party ordered local soviet and Party organs to increase the level of assistance to military families and war invalids located on the home front. In response, the Kazakh Sovnarkom and Communist Party issued an analogous decree. Abishev, *Kazakhstan v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine*, 170. The Soviet Central Committee entrusted Aleksei Kosygin with directing the distribution of benefits to Red Army families in the Soviet Union. Merridale, *Ivan's War*, 235-236.

¹³⁹ Manley, *To the Tashkent Station: Evacuation and Survival in the Soviet Union at War* (Ithaca, 2009), 260.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 258-264.

¹⁴¹ in *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, vol. 1: (2009), 48.

According to Bogdanov, local soviet officials refused to bury Arystanova, forcing the regional NKVD office to assume responsibility for her burial. In another case, a group of women in West-Kazakhstan Province led by the wife of a frontline soldier named Sherstenkinaia travelled to a local fishing point from their homes on the Our Labor [*Svoi trud*] Collective Farm.¹⁴² These women demanded fish from the directors of the point, threatening to commit suicide if the directors refused to give them any. In his report, Bogdanov claimed that upon learning of these incidences he ordered provincial NKVD organizations to open cafeterias and soup kitchens as well as organize auxiliary brigades to hunt birds and catch fish on collective farms.¹⁴³ It is not clear, however, whether local NKVD officials implemented these “measures” or whether they were able to alleviate hunger in Kazakhstan’s countryside. In any case, Bogdanov ominously concluded his report by noting that the situation in several districts was so severe that the state [*gosudarstvo*] had no choice but to send urgent assistance to hard-hit collective farms to prevent even more people from starving to death.¹⁴⁴

It is, of course, entirely possible that Bogdanov focused so much on the criminal indifference of local soviet officials to provide a simple and readily understandable explanation for a complex political and social problem while deflecting blame away from the leaders of Kazakhstan’s Party and government apparatuses. In this way, Bogdanov was probably adhering to the bureaucratic practice of scapegoating that was endemic inside wartime Kazakhstan. When local officials failed to fulfill Party and government directives, it was the NKVD’s job to explain the reasons for this failure to central officials in Moscow. It was convenient to explain the

¹⁴² Ibid, 49.

¹⁴³ Ibid, 51.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

abysmal living conditions of Kazakh military families by pointing the finger at irresponsible local authorities. Any explanation that referenced the overall shortage of food in the republic would have implied that the entire system of allocating supplies was defective and that central officials in Almaty and Moscow were not adequately attending to the needs of the republic's population. For high-ranking NKVD officials like Bogdanov, this was not a politically tenable opinion. Assigning blame to local officials, in contrast, made the problems affecting Kazakh military families seem anomalous and entirely localized.

The Soviet Union's bureaucratic culture almost certainly influenced how Kazakh NKVD officers like Bogdanov portrayed the living conditions of Kazakh military families. There is a great deal of evidence, however, indicating that discrimination against Kazakh military families was a very real phenomenon. This discrimination constantly undermined the efforts of Party and government authorities to transform Kazakh military families into a privileged group. In October 1944, provincial government officials organized a conference under the auspices of the Military Section of the Kazakh Communist Party to discuss the provisioning of benefits to military families. In a letter to Kazakh Communist Party Second Secretary Zhūmabai Shayakhmetov, Alekseev summarized the conference proceedings and pointed out that Party and soviet officials in a number of provinces were failing to distribute the food, clothing, and money to which military families were entitled.¹⁴⁵

Alekseev highlighted a number of cases where these officials diverted food, clothing, and money earmarked for military families to civilians and even deported special-settlers. According to Alekseev, this practice was not random – the majority of victimized military families were Kazakh. Given the very real discrimination that Kazakh soldiers experienced at the hands of

¹⁴⁵ “Spravka o respublikanskom soveshchani i zaveduiushchikh oblastnymi otdelam po Gosudarstvennomu i bytovomu ustroistvu semei voennosluzhashchikh,” October 26, 1944. APRK f. 708, o. 8, d. 1609, l. 40-45.

Slavic officers on the frontlines (see pages 68-82), it is reasonable to suspect that Kazakhstan's Slavic officials also discriminated against Kazakh military families. In his letter, Alekseev did not explain why local officials chose to divert these benefits to Slavic civilians and special-settlers. Most likely, prejudice against Kazakhs, combined with under-the-table payments from Slavic and special-settler civilians, convinced local Party and government officials to illegally distribute these benefits.¹⁴⁶ Most civilians in wartime Kazakhstan suffered from serious shortages of food and other basic commodities, and local soviet officials throughout the Soviet Union sometimes failed to distribute the benefits to which Slavic military families were entitled.¹⁴⁷ However, the unfair practices of local Party and government officials probably led to a disproportionate level of suffering among the hundreds of thousands of Kazakh families who had fathers, husbands, and brothers fighting at the front.

By the beginning of 1942, the labor crisis on Kazakhstan's collective farms had also engendered a serious food crisis in the republic's cities.¹⁴⁸ Even the residents of cities with a high concentration of arms factories and other enterprises vital to the war effort experienced hunger. To provide just one example, according to the minutes of a meeting of the Petropavl Party Committee held in January 1942, the city soviet was failing to organize the distribution of bread and other food products to local residents, leading to long lines at food stores and communal

¹⁴⁶ It is important to keep in mind that not all deportees were poor when they arrived in Kazakhstan during the war. According to the German deportee Berta Bachmann, German deportees from the North Caucasus arrived in Kazakhstan with considerable amounts of clothing, food, household utensils, and even gold rings and gold teeth. See Bachmann, *Memories of Kazakhstan: A Report on the Life Experiences of a German Woman in Russia* (Lincoln, 1981), 28-29. It is very possible that wealthy special-settlers like these Germans bribed local Party and government officials to acquire extra food and other basic commodities.

¹⁴⁷ For example, in January 1943 a group of soldiers' wives evacuated from Leningrad to the Chuvash ASSR wrote a letter to Kalinin indicating that they were desperate for food and other basic commodities because local collective farm administrators were not adequately compensating them for their labor. Siegelbaum, *Broad is My Native Land*, 260-261.

¹⁴⁸ Kozybaev, *Trud vo imia pobedy*, 85-91; Kozybaev, *Istoriia Kazakhstana*, vol. 4, 525.

cafeterias.¹⁴⁹ According to one speaker named Degtarenko, Petropavl's network of food stores [*magaziny*] and cafeterias was far too small to accommodate the hundreds of workers who arrived sometime around July 1941 with three evacuated armaments factories. These three factories had no cafeterias, leaving these workers on their own to search for food. If workers in armaments factories were not receiving enough food, it is likely that other city residents were in even worse straits. The recollections of Toby Clyman, a woman born in Poland who spent most of the war in the city of Zhambyl when she was a young girl, confirm that the food situation was precarious in other cities in Kazakhstan.¹⁵⁰ Clyman recalls that "hunger was just horrendous" in Zhambyl and food lines were extremely long. After standing in these lines, Clyman's mother would often come home with lice – an indication of the poor hygienic conditions that were rampant in the city.

Kazakh Communist Party reports written in 1943 make fewer references to hunger among industrial workers compared to 1942. According to the documentary record, government soviets in Kazakhstan's cities had brought the food crisis under control by 1943 by introducing strict rationing, establishing more workers' supplies sections [*ORSy*] in factories and other city enterprises, organizing auxiliary farms attached to enterprises, and encouraging workers to grow personal garden plots to supplement state food reserves.¹⁵¹ The food situation inside the

¹⁴⁹ "Vypiska iz protokola #189 punkt 1 zasedaniia biuro GK KP(b)K: O kult'urno-bytovom obsluzhivanii trudiashchikhsia goroda i razmeshchenii evakuirovannykh predpriiatii" APRK f. 708, o. 6, d. 1656, l. 5-7.

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Toby Clyman, August 15, 2012. Albany, NY. In 1939, the NKVD deported Clyman's family from eastern Poland and sent them a corrective-labor camp in Siberia. After the signing of the Polish-Soviet alliance in 1941, her family moved to Zhambyl. They managed to return to Lvov in 1945. After emigrating to the U.S., Clyman became a professor of Russian literature at the State University of New York at Albany.

¹⁵¹ Kozybaev, *Trud vo imia pobedy*, 86-91. Four food-rationing categories existed in the wartime Soviet Union. Soldiers and workers in industries critical to the war effort (such as coal and metallurgy) received the most food. Other workers received the second highest amount of food, officer workers the third highest, and state dependents received the least amount of food. See *ibid*, 86.

republic's cities had improved significantly compared to the countryside, but shortages of housing and key building materials meant that living conditions among Kazakhstan's urban workers continued to be far from ideal. A particularly indicative report written in the winter of 1943 by Head of the Personnel [*kadry*] Section of the Almaty City Party Committee Iskakov for the benefit of the City Party Bureau revealed the abysmal living conditions of 4,646 workers and dependents, including 1,302 children, residing in 33 dormitories attached to industrial enterprises in the city.¹⁵² According to Iskakov, these families had no access to safe drinking water and they lived in filthy and overcrowded dormitories that factory managers had failed to prepare for Almaty's harsh winter. One of the dormitories attached to the heavy machine-construction factory in the city's Stalin District contained no functional doors, and the residents of these dormitories had no choice but to cover the building's windows with paper or plywood because there was no available glass.

These horrendous conditions were very common inside Kazakhstan's industrial enterprises, necessitating the intervention of Moscow-based government officials. In January 1943, Soviet Commissar of Light Industry Lukin sent a directive to the managers of the evacuated Rostokino Fur Combine demanding that they immediately improve the abysmal living conditions of the Combine's workforce after it arrived in Kazakhstan from Moscow.¹⁵³ According to Lukin, a Soviet Commissariat of Light Industry inspection of worker dormitories revealed a litany of offenses: employees had to walk close to mile to gather potable water, male and female workers lived together in unheated barracks, and lavatories remained in a perpetually

¹⁵² "Dokladnaia o sostoianii rabochikh obshchezhitii v prompredpriatiiakh goroda Alma-Ata," APRK f. 412, o. 29, d. 24, l. 301-304.

¹⁵³ "O zhilishchno-bytovykh usloviakh rabochikh i sostoianii zhilogo fonda na Rostokinskom mekhovom kombinat," January 29, 1943. TsGARK f. 1488, o. 2, d. 274, l. 1-2. This report does not elaborate the destination of the Rostokino Fur Combine within Kazakhstan. Unfortunately, secondary sources contain very little information about the combine.

unsanitary state. The overall sanitary situation had become so egregious that the territory surrounding the barracks had become “covered with filth.” Poor conditions in Soviet cities were not unique to the Great Patriotic War period, but it is likely that supply breakdowns during the war made living conditions for Kazakhstan’s workers worse than they had been during the 1930s. Unable to remedy these problems, wartime central officials adopted the typical practice of scapegoating the republic’s local officials. For example, in his directive Lukin accused Combine Director Berezin and the Main Administration of the Fur Industry of knowingly allowing these conditions to fester. Lukin officially reprimanded Berezin for his negligence, warning him that if he did not improve the living conditions of his workers, the Soviet Commissariat of Light Industry would fire him.¹⁵⁴

Wartime Party and government reports about Kazakhstan’s industrial workforce seldom refer to the nationality of these workers, and for this reason it is difficult to determine if poor working conditions were as prevalent among Central Asian industrial workers as they were among Kazakh collective farmers. There is evidence, however, that government authorities in the republic’s cities were particularly negligent towards the needs of Central Asian workers. In April 1943, Deputy Commissar of Health of the Kazakh SSR Koriakin investigated a particularly suspicious case involving the death of five Uzbek workers in the Qaraghanda Coal Combine.¹⁵⁵ Koriakin’s conclusions in his subsequent report to the Central Committee of the Kazakh Communist Party were disturbing.

According to Koriakin, these deaths resulted directly from the negligence of a senior doctor in the Combine - a woman named Ogorodnikova. Koriakin’s investigation revealed that

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ “Spravka o rezul’tatakh rassledovaniia smerti 5-ti uzbekov rabochikh shakhty #20-bis, prozhivavshikh v obshchezhitii #1 shakhty #20-bis,” April 27, 1943. APRK f. 708, o. 7/1, d. 1042, l. 82.

Ogorodnikova repeatedly denied the requests of a sick Uzbek worker named Bazarov to be released to a hospital, and as a result, he died of tuberculosis. Another Uzbek worker named Uldeshev lingered in his dormitory with severe indications of a sickness for five to six days, after which medical personnel finally sent him to a hospital. Upon arriving at the hospital, doctors diagnosed Uldeshev with a brain tumor. By this point, the tumor had metastasized and it was too late to treat Uldeshev and he soon died. According to Koriakin, the deaths of the three other Uzbek workers also resulted from the “irresponsibility and negligence” of Ogorodnikova and other Kazakh Commissariat of Health workers in the Qaraghanda Coal Combine.

In his report, Koriakin did not explicitly accuse Ogorodnikova of being prejudiced against these five workers because they were Uzbeks. However, by continually highlighting their Uzbek nationality, Koriakin was forcefully implying that Ogorodnikova’s “unsympathetic attitude” towards these sick workers stemmed from bigotry. Despite official proclamations that the Qaraghanda Coal Basin was a site where Russians, Kazakhs, Uzbeks, and workers of many other nationalities heroically worked side by side to produce coal for their socialist Motherland,¹⁵⁶ national discrimination was a very real phenomenon here. The actions of government employees like Ogorodnikova reminded Central Asian workers that despite official proclamations of equality, ethnic bigotry still existed and some Slavic officials considered the lives of Central Asians to be expendable.

The internal labor mobilizations implemented by the wartime Kazakh Communist Party and Kazakh Sovnarkom were a response to the GKO’s incessant pressure to produce ever-greater amounts of munitions, metals, energy, and food with a vastly depleted work force. Through these internal labor mobilizations, Soviet officials in Moscow and Almaty created a vast

¹⁵⁶ See for example “Ugol’ sverkh plana,” *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*. June 25, 1941, 3.

exploited labor force that they fastened to collective farms and other economic enterprises through threats of repression. It is true that “labor desertion” was a persistent problem in wartime Kazakhstan, just as it was in every Soviet region during the war. Overall, however, labor mobilization amplified the power of Soviet authorities to exploit the republic’s laboring populations. This exploitation led to a significant reduction in the living and working conditions of Kazakhstan’s workers and farmers. These conditions improved gradually for workers in the republic’s industrial enterprises, but conditions in the countryside steadily deteriorated as the war progressed, leading to widespread starvation. Kazakh workers and collective farmers generally suffered more than Slavic laborers, a consequence of the inability of Kazakhs to influence the local soviet officials who distributed food. During the war, the Kazakh Communist Party and Kazakh government attempted to create a multinational labor force composed of people with the same rights and duties to the Soviet Motherland, but this vision proved difficult to implement in practice. Like Kazakhs in the Red Army, Kazakhs and other Central Asians working on the Soviet home front were not the equals of their Slavic compatriots.

Conclusion

The Great Patriotic War intensified the Stalinist drive to move vast numbers of people across wide geographic distances to achieve strategic and defense-related economic goals. Between 1941 and 1945, the NKO and Soviet economic commissariats asserted more and more administrative control over Kazakhstan’s laboring populations, resulting in sustained conflicts over the allocation of industrial workers and collective farmers. Local Party officials and the heads of local economic enterprises developed a number of strategies for contesting these labor levies, but when the labor needs of local enterprises collided with those of the Soviet Union’s

liberated western regions, Kazakhstan's local officials consistently failed to prevent Soviet institutions from redeploying their workers. Central bodies like the GKO and NKO never enjoyed monopolistic or omniscient control over the labor-allocation process, but as the war entered its terminal phase, Party and government officials in Kazakhstan could do little but fight a desperate rearguard action to maintain the integrity of their workforces. Wartime mobilization increased the republic's overall economic importance within the Soviet economy, but it also weakened the ability of Kazakhstan's Party and government leaders to influence Soviet economic policies, both on the all-Union level and in Kazakhstan itself.

The labor mobilization campaign waged by Soviet authorities from 1941 to 1945 accelerated two long-term trends in Kazakhstan that had important consequences for the republic's postwar history. First, the process of mobilizing the republic's populations for wartime economic production deepened the republic's integration into the all-Union economy and increased its subordination to Moscow-based government bodies. Second, labor mobilization increased the gap in living standards between the republic's Kazakhs and Slavs. Privation and hunger hit all segments of Kazakhstan's population during the war, but it hit Central Asians hardest of all. This differentiated suffering, along with the discriminatory practices of local Party and government officials, undoubtedly prompted many Kazakhs to question whether Soviet officials in Moscow and Almaty had the best interests of the republic's titular nationality in mind. Just as wartime conscription exposed the fiction of national equality within the Red Army, wartime labor mobilization accentuated Kazakhstan's unequal economic relationship with other Soviet regions and deepened inequalities between Central Asian and Slavic workers. These inequalities presented Kazakh Communist Party leaders with a potent dilemma. These officials demanded that the Kazakhs make extraordinary sacrifices for the sake

of the Soviet Motherland, but these authorities were able to offer the Kazakhs little in return for their exertions. As the next chapter will argue, Kazakh Communist Party leaders arrived at a predictable solution for solving this dilemma - accelerating propaganda efforts within the Kazakh *aul*.

Chapter 4 – The Ideological Front: Propaganda and the Struggle for Hearts and Minds in Kazakhstan

In January 1942, *Kazakhstanskaia pravda* published an article by Secretary of the Propaganda Section of the West-Kazakhstan Provincial Party Committee Losev.¹ This article highlighted the case of a Party member named Isbasarova, a troublesome collective farmer who chronically failed to fulfill her production norms because she spent her days idling about the fields. According to Losev, the local Kazakh Communist Party agitator, a man named Kabiev, refused to allow Isbasarova to undermine the agricultural campaign on this collective farm and resolved to correct her indolent ways. Kabiev held several meetings with Isbasarova and explained to her that the labor of Kazakhstan's collective farmers was vital to the war effort and she had a duty to conscientiously labor for the Soviet Motherland because she was a Soviet citizen and Party member. Not stopping with this "political education," Kabiev exposed Isbasarova to extensive public shaming [*obshchestvennoe mnenie*] among her fellow collective farmers. In Losev's estimation, Kabiev's efforts had an entirely salutary effect on Isbasarova, since she not only began fulfilling but also over-fulfilling her agricultural output norms and she became a model collective farmer.

As suggested by Losev's article, the ideological struggle for the hearts and minds of Kazakhstan's inhabitants was a critical component of the Soviet mobilizational effort. Western historians have portrayed propaganda in the wartime Soviet Union almost exclusively as a device used by the Communist Party to exert ideological control over the populations under its control.²

¹ G. V. Losev, "Partiino-politicheskaia rabota v Zapadnom-Kazakhstane," *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*. January 22, 1942, 2.

Communist Party officials in Moscow and Almaty were certainly interested in shaping the thoughts of Kazakhstan's inhabitants, but the agitprop campaign in the republic was far more nuanced than suggested by the existing scholarship on Soviet propaganda. From 1941 to 1945, the Kazakh Communist Party waged a propaganda campaign that had two interrelated goals: boosting economic productivity among the republic's workers and collective farmers, and promoting a Soviet identity among the Kazakh population.

As the war dragged on, the leaders of the Kazakh Communist Party increasingly treated propaganda as a cure-all for the many problems besetting labor mobilization in the republic, from a lack of productivity on collective farms to inefficiency on the factory floor. Party propagandists never deviated from this panacean conception of agitprop, but throughout the war, they demonstrated a marked ability to innovate and change their message in response to changing conditions on the frontlines and in Kazakhstan. These alterations to the propaganda line facilitated the Kazakh Communist Party's goal of integrating the Kazakhs into the Soviet economy and Soviet society by instructing them how to be productive and loyal Soviet citizens.³

² See in particular Richard Brody, "Ideology and Political Mobilization: The Soviet Home Front during World War II," *Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies*, no. 1104: (1994). Brody argues that this campaign failed dismally because Soviet citizens and party activists could not internalize the message of this propaganda. In Brody's estimation, this failure stemmed from the yawning gap between the Party's version of reality and dismal living and working conditions on the ground. See also Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger*, especially 68-95. Berkhoff similarly argues that the main goal of wartime propaganda was to maintain control over the Soviet population and not to mobilize them for labor or combat. Berkhoff maintains that Soviet propaganda was hopelessly stilted and laid no real foundation for dialogue between Party-state authorities on the one hand and workers and peasants on the other. For these reasons, Berkhoff maintains that the wartime propaganda campaign was a failure. David Brandenberger highlights a similar dynamic in his analysis of Soviet propaganda during the 1930s. For Brandenberger, the main dilemma of the Soviet propaganda establishment was finding a way to make agitprop understandable and appealing to the masses. By the late 1930s, propaganda officials moved away from abstract Marxist-Leninist theory as a primary medium of political education and instead focused on more populist themes and mediums such as Stalin's cult of personality, the heroization of exceptional Soviet people, and a geographically enclosed sense of Soviet patriotism. See David Brandenberger, *Propaganda State in Crisis: Soviet Ideology, Indoctrination, and Terror under Stalin, 1927-1941* (New Haven, 2011).

³ One of the major methodological assumptions of this chapter is that it is not prudent to analyze Stalinist propaganda in terms of separate economic, ideological, and cultural spheres. Propaganda campaigns related to boosting economic productivity during the 1930s and 1940s usually had a strong cultural content. For example,

This propaganda effort on the Kazakh home front complemented PURKKA's concurrent attempts to integrate Kazakh soldiers into the wider Soviet community (see Chapter Two). Logistical difficulties constantly handicapped Kazakhstan's agitators, and the Kazakh Communist Party frequently failed to devote adequate resources and attention to the propaganda campaign in the Kazakh *aul*. Despite these very real problems, wartime agitprop became a powerful conceptual medium for expanding the worldview of the Kazakh population to encompass the vast Soviet Motherland. In this manner, the Kazakh Communist Party contributed to parallel efforts on the part of other Soviet institutions to integrate the Kazakhs into Soviet military and economic institutions while Sovietizing their identity.

“Falling Outside the Vision of the Party”: Propaganda in Wartime Kazakhstan

Propaganda on the Kazakh home front and agitprop among Kazakh soldiers were broadly similar in style and content.⁴ According to First Secretary of the Kazakh Communist Party Nikolai Skvortsov, the primary objective of propaganda was to establish the ideological foundation for the full-scale participation of the republic's population in the war effort as soldiers and workers.⁵ The official position of the Central Committee of the Kazakh Communist Party was that the republic's industrial workers and collective farmers would engage in “heroic” labor

Soviet officials designed the Stakhanovite movement of the 1930s to create a class of super-efficient industrial workers that was cultured and well versed in Soviet ideology. For Soviet authorities, possession of the right cultural and ideological attributes was a vital prerequisite for economic productivity. See Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the USSR*, 210-246.

⁴ See Harun Yilmaz, “History Writing as Agitation and Propaganda: the Kazakh History Book of 1943,” *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 31 (4): (2012), 409-423. In Bolshevik parlance propaganda referred to written political materials and agitation to speeches and other verbal mediums. Peter Kenez notes that the practical distinction between agitation and propaganda was largely meaningless in the Soviet context, hence the heavy use of the compound term agitprop in Party sources. Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State*, 7-8.

⁵ Shelgunov, “Bol'shevistskaia pechat' Kazakhstana v gody Otechestvennoi voiny” 11.

only if local agitators succeeded in instilling a genuine Soviet consciousness in them.⁶ This characterization of communist propaganda was not entirely new of course – the mutually constitutive relationship between a proper “proletarian consciousness” and labor was an important element of Bolshevik ideology even before the October Revolution.⁷ The greatly increased economic demands forced on Kazakhstan’s laboring populations during the Great Patriotic War, however, prompted Kazakh Communist Party leaders to advocate an even closer connection between Soviet ideology and economic productivity.

Reading the documentary record against the grain reveals that wartime agitprop in Kazakhstan and other Soviet regions was not primarily a method for inspiring workers and collective farmers to work harder, even if the officials who directed the Agitprop Sections of the Soviet and Kazakh Communist Parties presented it as such. In actuality, the propaganda campaign became a foil that Kazakh Communist Party leaders used to explain defeats on the labor front in a way that circumvented real but ideologically unacceptable issues such as the indifference of workers and collective farmers. The reason central Party officials in Moscow and Almaty focused on the propaganda campaign so intently was because this campaign served the vital political function of giving them an excuse for production-related failures. The Central Committee of the Kazakh Communist Party devoted few personnel and funds to improving the quality of propaganda work among Kazakhs compared to the resources it allocated to mobilize them for frontline service. This suggests that propaganda was not a central priority for the

⁶ See for example “Plan besedy s chlenami agitpropgruppy TsK, komandiruemyi na uborku urozhaia,” sometime after July 6, 1941. APRK f. 708, o. 6, d. 78, l. 2-16.

⁷ For example, during the Civil War Lenin described productive labor as the “principal and most important” factor in the coming victory of socialism over capitalism. He described communism as, in its essence, a higher form of economic production compared to capitalism, since under communism workers would “labor voluntarily, in a conscious and united manner, and using advanced technology.” V. I. Lenin, “Velikii pochin,” 1919 in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow, 1963) vol. 39, 1-29.

Kazakh Party leadership. Party leaders certainly sought to disseminate their ideological message to the Kazakh masses, but not at the expense of allocating skilled personnel and scarce monetary resources to the *aul*.

In the fall of 1941, the Central Committee of the Kazakh Communist Party ordered local agitprop workers to expand the republic's propaganda network and intensify agitprop among all segments of the population to "mobilize all their strength and material resources for the fastest possible destruction of the enemy."⁸ This decree specified that local agitprop workers were to pay special attention to "Kazakh workers" [*trudiashchikhsia-kazakhov*] and propagandize in their native language. More concretely, this decree ordered local Party officials to augment the existing agitprop network by introducing agitation points [*agitpunkti*] in all cities and districts centers. Agitation points and local political sections, both of which were part of Kazakh Communist Party cells, coordinated the work of smaller agitation collectives embedded in government institutions, factories, collective farms, and other economic enterprises.⁹ The directors of these collectives directed agitation brigades attached to reading huts, red corners, libraries, and other lodgings devoted to "political-enlightenment."¹⁰ The Kazakh Party leadership

⁸ "Meropriiatii po perestroike agitatsionno-propagandistskoi raboty i organizatsii propagandy voennykh znanii sredi naseleniia oblasti", probably September 1941 based on the dates of other documents in this *delo*. APRK f. 708, o. 5/1, d. 596, l. 97-103. On November 7, 1941, the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party issued a resolution ordering all Party committees to establish political sections in MTSs and state farms to "strengthen the leadership of the Party over agriculture and assist collective and state farms". According to Abishev, the Central Committee of the Kazakh Communist Party deployed around 1,500 directors to these political sections. Abishev, *Kazakhstan v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine*, 38. Around this time, Communist Party organs in other Soviet regions issued analogous decrees aimed at strengthening agitprop work. For example, on August 8, 1941 the Central Committee of the Uzbek Communist Party ordered local Party organs to intensify agitprop work in order to "instill loyalty to the Soviet Motherland and strengthen the faith of the people in victory over the enemy." Aminova, *Istoriia Uzbekskoi SSR*, 88-89.

⁹ During the war, more than 60 agitation points operated in the city of Almaty alone. Abishev, *Kazakhstan v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine, 1941-1945*, 195.

¹⁰ Brody, "Ideology and Political Mobilization," 6.

ordered the commissars and agitators comprising these agitprop brigades to impart the Party's message to as many people as possible through public agitprop readings, political meetings, and the production of wall newspapers and other printed materials like posters. The Party's Agitprop Section expected these agitators to complement the work of the republic's Kazakh-language schools, which continued to operate despite the departure of teachers for the front and the redirection of funds to the industrial and military sectors.¹¹

Just like at the front, the Soviet and Kazakh Communist Parties considered newspapers, lectures, and "mass meetings" to be the most effective mediums for disseminating information.¹² Wartime Party propagandists focused much of their energy on conducting lectures, partially because it became increasingly difficult to produce newspapers in mass quantities, both in Kazakhstan and in the Soviet Union as a whole.¹³ The Agitprop Section of the Kazakh Communist Party usually sent newspapers to Party agitators who then read them at public meetings. During the war the most important newspapers in Kazakhstan were the Russian-language *Kazakhstanskaia pravda* and the Kazakh-language *Sotsialistiĭk Qazaqstan*. These newspapers reprinted the directives and resolutions of Communist Party and government organs

¹¹ Citing official sources, Abishev claims that 5,997 primary schools were in operation in Kazakhstan during the 1939-1940 academic year, of which 3,051 were Kazakh-language. In addition to these primary schools, there were 108 secondary and 17 higher educational institutions in the republic at this time. Abishev, *Kazakhstan v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine*, 14.

¹² For an elaboration of this position, see "Boevye zadachi mestnykh gazet," *Pravda*, July 1, 1942, 1. See also Abishev, *Kazakhstan v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine*, 188-190. According to the 1939 Soviet census, Kazakhstan was mostly literate – even the adult populations of poor and predominantly Kazakh provinces like Kzyl-Orda and South-Kazakhstan enjoyed a literacy rate of more than 68%. This was the result of an aggressive campaign to liquidate illiteracy during the 1930s. For the census figure, see Poliakov, *Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naseleniia 1939 goda*, 43.

¹³ According to Manash Kozybaev, the printing runs of every newspaper in the republic dropped sharply during the war with only two exceptions: the newspaper *Socialist Farming* and the journal *Propagandist*. See Kozybaev, *Kazakhstan - arsenal fronta*, 189-194.

along with news from the front and international news provided by the Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union (TASS).



Figure 14: An agitator on the Kazakh Frontier Party Committee Collective Farm holding a meeting with milk farmers about the establishment of the National Defense Fund. Aqmola Province, August 1941. TsGAKZRK, 2-5724. For Party agitators, there was no distinction between providing news about current events and conducting propaganda – they were both inseparable components of the Party’s informational campaign.

The Kazakh Communist Party partially compensated for the lack of printed agitprop materials by expanding the number of radio stations in the republic. According to a November 1941 report from Secretary for Agitprop of the Kazakh Communist Party Gabdulla Buzurbaev to Deputy Director of the Agitprop Section of the Soviet Communist Party Makhanov, Kazakhstan contained 148,539 radiobroadcasting points.¹⁴ Only 58 of these points, however, were capable of

¹⁴ “Informatsiia ob uchastii trudiashchikhsia Kazakhskoi SSR v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine s nemetskim fashizmom,” November 6, 1941. RGASPI f. 17, o. 6, d. 44, l. 111-116. Buzurbaev was Secretary for Agitprop from July 1941 until he died in a plane crash in December. Ashimbaev, *Kto est’ kto v Kazakhstane*, 264.

daily broadcasts that lasted between 10 and 15 minutes. To the chagrin of Agitprop officials in Kazakhstan, the Kazakh Commissariat of Communications often failed to broadcast substantive programming in Kazakh. An August-September 1941 inspection conducted by the Agitprop Section of the Kazakh Commissariat Party, for example, revealed that radio stations in the republic only broadcasted translated Russian-language programs and never bothered to develop original programs in Kazakh.¹⁵ Because radiobroadcasters were generally ineffective in reaching the Kazakh masses, the Kazakh Party Agitprop Section focused on printed materials and oral agitation as primary ideological mediums.

The directors of agitation points expected propagandists to work in factories and on collective farms alongside other workers and propagandize during breaks and in the evenings.¹⁶ Agitators in Kazakhstan, like in all Soviet regions, were supposed to be well versed in production-related technology and labor methods so they could provide auxiliary technical instruction to industrial workers and collective farmers.¹⁷ According to Stalin, propagandists could ensure success on the economic front only by combining production-related agitprop with “Party-political work.”¹⁸ In line with this dictum, Party inspectors in Kazakhstan voiced alarm when they perceived that local agitprop workers were separating political instruction from

¹⁵ APRK f. 708, o. 8, d. 1262, l. 21-26.

¹⁶ See for example “Trudiashchiesia goroda pomogaut kolkhozam ubirat’ urozhai,” *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, August 19, 1942, 2. Party officials also ordered collective farm directors to utilize “the most active and prepared portions” of city populations arriving in agricultural regions to conduct mass-cultural work. “Plan besedy s chlenami agitpropgruppy TsK, komanduruemymi na uborku urozhaia,” APRK f. 708, o. 6, d. 78, l. 2-16.

¹⁷ As Peter Kenez points out, the Bolsheviks never clearly distinguished between education and propaganda, referring to both as components of “political enlightenment”. See Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State*.

¹⁸ For an elaboration of this position as it pertained to Kazakhstan’s collective farms, see “Saiasi-aghartu mekemlerining zhauyngerlik mindetteri,” *Sotsialistik Qazaqstan*, June 4, 1944, 2.

occupation-related training.¹⁹ This was, however, only one of the problems undermining the Party's agitprop campaign in wartime Kazakhstan, and it was far from the most serious.

From 1941 to 1945, Party officials in Moscow and Almaty expressed increasing frustration with the poor quality of propaganda work in Kazakhstan. The overall breakdown of Soviet agitprop efforts due to material shortcomings and administrative disarray described by the historian Richard Brody hit Kazakhstan particularly hard.²⁰ Agitprop directors in Almaty persistently demanded that local propagandists conduct their work in every corner of the republic, but paradoxically, the Central Committee of the Kazakh Communist Party did not provide local agitprop organizations with the means to accomplish this formidable task. Lack of funds and paper, for example, led to drastically reduced newspaper runs throughout the war.²¹ Even when newspapers were available, they often arrived at their destinations very late – as many as 15-20 days behind schedule in the case of central titles like *Pravda* and *Izvestia* and 7-10 days late in the case of *Kazakhstanskaia pravda* and *Sotsialistĭk Qazaqstan*.²²

These delays were especially common in Kazakhstan because of the vast distances between district centers and collective farms and because local military commissars mobilized

¹⁹ For an elaboration of this position, see "Partiino-politicheskaia rabota v Zapadnom Kazakhstane," *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, January 22, 1942, 2. As late as October 1945, the Almaty city party committee criticized agitators embedded in economic enterprises for failing to devote needed attention to reducing cost prices [*sebestoimost'*], eliminating wastage, and economizing on power. See "Protokol #34 zasedaniia buro Alma-Atinskogo gorodskogo komiteta KP(b)K," October 30, 1945. APRK f. 412, o. 29, d. 60, l. 83-97.

²⁰ Brody, "Ideology and Political Mobilization," 11.

²¹ Shelgunov, "Bol'shevistskaia pechat' Kazakhstana v gody Otechestvennoi voiny," 1941, 75. This essay can be found in APRK f. 811 [Marx-Engels Institute of Kazakhstan], o. 8, d. 271. For the widespread paper shortages that afflicted the wartime USSR, see Brody, "Ideology and Political Mobilization," 10.

²² "Tirazhi respublikanskoi gazety "Sotsialistik Kazakhstan" v sviazi s sokrashcheniem na 10% s 1.3.1943," APRK f. 708, o. 7/1, d. 698, l. 2; "Tirazhi respublikanskoi gazety "Kazakhstanskaia Pravda" v sviazi s sokrashcheniem na 10% s 1.3.1943," APRK f. 708, o. 7/1, d. 698, l. 3. 22.9% of the printed issues of *Sotsialistĭk Qazaqstan* went to Almaty Province and 32.2% of printed issues of *Kazakhstanskaia pravda* went to Almaty city.

most automobiles and horses for use by the Red Army. As late as 1944 Secretary of the Agitprop Section of the Pavlodar Provincial Party Committee Printsev reported to the Kazakh Party Central Committee that agitprop workers often had to deliver propaganda materials to Kazakh *auls* and Slavic villages on the backs of oxen, “starving horses,” and even cows.²³ During the war, in short, the Kazakh Communist Party urgently sought to spread its message in order to mobilize every Kazakh and Slavic worker in the republic, but as the war progressed, the monetary and logistical resources necessary to carry out this task became stretched to their utmost limit.

These logistical hurdles were especially prevalent in regions with large Kazakh populations. The wartime records of the Agitprop Section of the Kazakh Communist Party indicate that there was an insufficient number of Kazakh-speaking propagandists to accomplish the Party’s grandiose goal of conducting “mass-political work” in every *aul* in the republic. According to Manash Kozybaev, 82,251 members of the Kazakh Communist Party (65.2% of the total membership, including both Kazakhs and Slavs) enlisted in the Red Army during the Great Patriotic War.²⁴ Conscription hit the republic’s rural Party network particularly hard. In November 1943, for example, only 23,890 collective farmers in Kazakhstan were Party members, compared to 32,427 in July 1941.²⁵ As a result, the Kazakh Communist Party had little choice but to draw on a far smaller pool of Party members to work as agitators. For example, in September 1941 Secretary of the Almaty Provincial Party Committee Temir-Alin reported to the Kazakh Party Central Committee that only 40 Kazakh agitprop workers lived in the province,

²³ “O marksistko-leninskome vospitanii kadrov politicheskoi i kul’turnoi raboty v pavlodarskoi oblasti,” June 17, 1944. APRK f. 708, o. 8, d. 1266, l. 1-40.

²⁴ Kozybaev, *Kazakhstan – arsenal fronta*, 62-72

²⁵ *Ibid*, 70.

even though this region had a Kazakh population of over 200,000 according to the 1939 census.²⁶

More than a year later, there was little indication that the Kazakh Communist Party had recruited more Kazakh-speaking agitprop workers. For instance, a report from the Zhambyl Provincial Party Committee to Mukhamedzhan Adbykalykov, the Agitprop Secretary of the Kazakh Communist Party from 1942 to 1947, indicated that the Party Committee only had a single lecturer fluent in Kazakh at its disposal – this in one of the most heavily Kazakh-populated provinces in the republic.²⁷ Even when Kazakh agitators were available, their low educational level often prevented them from propagandizing effectively. Propagandists recruited during the war tended to be young, inexperienced, and educated at an average to low level. Whereas PURKKA handpicked propagandists for frontline work with the cooperation of the Kazakh Communist Party and instructed them at Party educational institutions, agitprop workers in Kazakhstan’s isolated rural regions usually underwent little formal training – they were simply collective farmers who were Party members with some level of literacy.²⁸ An investigatory team sent by the Central Committee of the Kazakh Communist Party to verify the progress of agitprop

²⁶ “O realizatsii resheniia TsK KP(b)K ot 2.8.1941 v Alma-Atinskoi oblasti,” September 2, 1941. APRK f. 708, o. 5/1, d. 596, l. 8-11. For the census figure, see Poliakov, *Vsesoiuznaia perepis’ naseleniia 1939 goda*, 76.

²⁷ “Otchet o propagandistsko-agitatsionnoi i kul’turno-prosvetitel’noi rabote za istekshii 1943 god po Dzhambul’skoi oblasti,” APRK f. 708, o. 8, d. 1275, l. 97-103; For the demographic figure, see Poliakov, *Vsesoiuznaia perepis’ naseleniia 1939 goda*, 77. Abdykalykov was born in 1907 in Akmolinsk uezd. He graduated from the Abai Kazakh Pedagogical Institute in 1932 with a degree in history and economics. In 1937, he became an instructor for the Central Committee of the Kazakh Communist Party and from 1938 to 1941, he served as Kazakh Commissar of Enlightenment. He became Agitprop Secretary of the Kazakh Communist Party after Buzurbaev died in December 1941. Ashimbaev, *Kto est’ kto v Kazakhstane*, 20. During the war, Abdykalykov played an important role in publishing the *History of the Kazakh SSR* – the first comprehensive history of Kazakhstan. See Abdykalykov (ed.), *Istoriia Kazakhstana: istoriia Kazakhskoi SSR s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei, 3-e izdanie 1943 g.* (Almaty, 2011).

²⁸ For an altogether positive and stereotypically Soviet description of the recruitment of Party agitators in Kazakhstan’s agricultural regions in 1941-1942, see Abishev, *Kazakhstan v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine*, 39.

work in Zhambyl province in September 1941 revealed that the majority of Kazakh agitators in this region were barely literate and could read newspapers “only with great difficulty.”²⁹ The documentary record of the Agitprop Section of the Kazakh Party is full of similarly negative reports about the quality of Kazakh propagandists working in the republic’s *auls*.

These kinds of problems were prolific in the Kazakh countryside, but they were by no means confined to rural areas. For example, a brigade of Kazakh Communist Party investigators sent to Semei in the summer of 1941 reported to the Kazakh Party Central Committee that a number of serious shortcomings were afflicting propaganda work among the city’s workers, especially Kazakh workers.³⁰ Kazakh members of the Red Leather Worker and 18th Party Conference Production Cooperatives [*arteli*] informed these investigators that no one was reading newspapers to them, and one worker accused local Party officials of deliberately concealing the situation on the frontlines from them. Another cooperative worker stated that she was very interested in the situation at the front because she had two sons in the army, but she could not read and was too embarrassed to ask her colleagues for help. This worker maintained that it was the responsibility of political agitators to provide this essential information, and the Party investigators concurred.³¹

The chairpersons and Party representatives of these Semei production cooperatives attempted to explain these propaganda failures away by claiming that they could find no literate Kazakhs qualified enough to work as agitators.³² This explanation failed to satisfy the Kazakh

²⁹ APRK f. 708, o. 5/1, d. 597, l. 70-72.

³⁰ “Informatsiia rukovoditeliia brigady TsK KP(b) Kazakhstana o sootvetstvii raboty na mestakh trebovaniyam voennogo vremeni,” July 10, 1941. APRK f. 708, o. 1/1, d. 2, l. 119-136.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

Communist Party investigators. According to them, around 40 Kazakh teachers lived in this district of the city, and the officials directing these cooperatives could have recruited them to conduct agitprop work but never took the initiative to do.³³ The investigators maintained that these officials were neglecting the ideological needs of their Kazakh workers because they were more concerned with mundane administrative tasks and did not see the close connection between agitprop and high economic productivity.

With the advantage of historical hindsight, we can hypothesize that these cooperative officials saw recruiting Kazakh teachers and other agitprop-related duties as time-wasting burdens that interfered with more pressing tasks such as directing production on the workshop floor. In any case, the accusatory tone of this document was typical of Kazakh Communist Party investigatory reports produced from 1941 to 1945. As the war continued, officials working for the Kazakh Party's Agitprop administration became more and more apt to blame local agitprop workers for neglecting the Kazakh population. The Kazakh Party leadership was likely using these agitprop workers as scapegoats as part of a more general strategy for explaining its inability to disseminate its ideological messages to the Kazakh population. This was similar to the way that wartime Kazakh NKVD and Kazakh Party officials explained failures to distribute food and other vital goods to Kazakh workers and collective farmers (see pages 184-195). Party leaders in Almaty were unable to allocate more personnel and funds to local political sections due to extreme wartime shortages, so they used scapegoating as a political strategy to bide time until they could increase their capacity to conduct a more effective propaganda campaign among the republic's Kazakhs.

³³ The Kazakh Communist Party commonly mobilized teachers and members of the intelligentsia for agitprop work. For example according to Gaziz Abishev, the wartime Kazakh Communist Party recruited 700 members of the intelligentsia in Almaty city to act as propagandists, seminar directors, consultants, and agitators. See Abishev, *Kazakhstan v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine*, 186-187.

To the dismay of Agitprop officials in Moscow, during the war the Kazakh Communist Party never achieved this capacity. In fact, the documentary record strongly suggests that the state of propaganda in the Kazakh countryside barely improved in the next two years - a period of intensive labor mobilization in support of the Soviet counteroffensives at Moscow and Stalingrad. Rather than focusing on the most obvious explanations for the poor quality of this agitprop work such as a lack of trained personnel and shortages of propaganda materials, these central officials usually blamed “negligent” Party officials in the republic. Sometime between January 1943 and December 1945, Agitprop head Georgii Aleksandrov sent a typically exasperated telegram to Skvortsov and all provincial Party sections in Kazakhstan complaining about the dismally low quality of propaganda in the region.³⁴ According to Aleksandrov, Party organizations in the republic had completely failed to fulfill recent directives from the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party designed to improve “political-education”. He maintained that local agitprop officials in Almaty, Semei, and West-Kazakhstan provinces were making virtually no effort to keep reading huts, political clubs, libraries, and museums open, while district Party committees were failing to distribute political literature to local agitprop workers. Perhaps the most serious shortcoming elaborated in Aleksandrov’s telegram was the poor qualifications of local propagandists in Kazakhstan. According to him, Party inspectors from Moscow had discovered that only 70% of the employees of political-educational institutions in the Kazakh countryside could claim any degree of literacy. Oftentimes, these “literate” agitators could do little more than sign their names.

How did local Party officials in Kazakhstan respond to the incessant criticisms of Party leaders in Moscow and Almaty? Most of their solutions were ad hoc and did not adequately

³⁴ RGASPI f. 17, o. 6, d. 219, l. 75-76. Between January 1943 and December 1945.

address the weaknesses undermining the agitprop campaign in the Kazakh countryside. For example, in the summer of 1943 a brigade of Kazakh Communist Party investigators reported to the Party Central Committee that the directors of the K kshetau district agitation point in North-Kazakhstan province sent a large group of Russian propagandists to local collective farms in response to directives to intensify agitprop work in the region. These directors deployed these Russian agitprop workers to local collective farms despite the fact that the “overwhelming majority” of farmers in the district were Kazakhs.³⁵ This “solution” to the absence of “mass-political work” in K kshetau district violated a key principle of Soviet nationality policies during the 1940s – giving Soviet citizens the option to hear propaganda in their native language.

From a more practical perspective, the author(s) of this investigatory report feared that these Kazakh collective farmers would ignore Russian-language propaganda because so few of them could understand the language. These investigators maintained that if the Kazakh collective farmers did not comprehend the Party’s message, they would labor in a less than conscientious manner and ultimately imperil the supply of food to the front.³⁶ It seems probable, however, that the propaganda problems in this district were rooted in something more than the indifference of local agitprop directors. The administrators of the K kshetau district agitation point probably deployed Russian propagandists to these Kazakh collective farms because they had no alternative given the overall dearth of trained Kazakh agitators in the republic. The response of these directors to the criticisms of the Kazakh Party investigators was perfunctory and devoid of common sense, but in their minds, an illogical solution was better than no solution at all. These agitprop directors, and likely other local propaganda workers in the republic as

³⁵ “Spravka o sostoianii politicheskoi raboty v kolkhozakh i sovkhozakh Severo-Kazakhstanskoi oblasti,” June 26, 1943. APRK f. 708, o. 7/1, d. 662, l. 137.

³⁶ Ibid.

well, were probably desperate to avoid further censure by the Kazakh Communist Party Central Committee. This desire prompted them to implement expedient measures that did not solve the underlying problems undermining the agitprop campaign in the Kazakh *aul*.

On paper, the Kazakh Communist Party Central Committee continued to attach enormous importance to its propaganda campaign as late as the fall of 1943. Party leaders, however, were still consistently failing to allocate the personnel and resources to conduct this campaign in an effective manner, especially among Kazakhs and other non-Russians. This was even the case in regions and economic enterprises critical to the war effort like the Qaraghandy Coal Basin. An early 1944 report from the Kazakh Communist Party Agitprop official Iakunin to Abdykalykov, for instance, zeroed in on “weak mass political work among the workers of the Basin” as the primary cause of massive production shortfalls from October 1943 to January 1944.³⁷ According to Iakunin, agitprop workers only rarely held seminars about ideological issues and concerned themselves solely with “economic questions” such as economizing on energy and raw materials.

Even more seriously, Iakunin lamented that these agitators were completely indifferent to propaganda work among non-Russian miners. He pointed out that 45% of the workforce of Mine #20 consisted of Kazakhs, Uzbeks, and Koreans, but the administrative apparatus of this mine consisted almost entirely of Russians.³⁸ The majority of these miners could not understand Russian, but agitators insisted on propagandizing entirely in Russian – almost certainly because they did not know Kazakh, Uzbek, or Korean. Iakunin pointed out that the secretary of the mine’s Komsomol organization was Kazakh, but the local agitation point had failed to properly

³⁷ APRK f. 708, o. 7/1, d. 662, l. 1-4. January 1944.

³⁸ These Koreans were likely special-settlers deported to Kazakhstan during the late 1930s. In 1937, the NKVD exiled 14,600 Korean households from the Soviet Far East to Kazakhstan. Of these, the NKVD planned to send 1,155 households to Qaraghandy Province. G. B. Kan, *Koreitsy Kazakhstana: istoricheskii ocherk* (Almaty, 1994), 16-17.

utilize her and she had become little more than a fulltime translator who conducted absolutely no agitprop work. For Iakunin, this was a very serious problem because it meant that nearly half of the workforce of this mine had “fallen outside the field of vision [*pol zreniia*] and influence of the Party organization.”³⁹

In his report to Abdykalykov, Iakunin explicitly equated high productivity in the Qaraghanda Coal Basin with the ability of Kazakh, Uzbek, and Korean miners to understand and internalize the Kazakh Communist Party’s propaganda. Many other reports written by local Kazakh Party officials in 1944-1945 assumed a similarly close relationship between agitprop and economic productivity. For example, a June 1944 report from Secretary of Personnel [*kadry*] of the North-Kazakhstan Provincial Party Committee Pil’guk to Abdykalykov claimed that the “mass-political work” of local agitators had resulted in the emergence of 2,860 Stakhanovites, 1,707 shock-workers, and hundreds of other exceptionally productive employees in the railroad construction zone near the city of Petropavl.⁴⁰ Here, Pil’guk was suggesting that agitprop directly increased productivity among workers in a simple cause and effect manner. By 1944-1945, this perspective had become axiomatic for Kazakh Communist Party officials working at all levels of the agitprop administration. From the point of view of Kazakh Communist Party officials like Abdykalykov, agitprop was the ideological fuel for mass labor mobilization and the cure-all for the many problems besetting the republic’s productive effort.

The widespread doctrinal belief that agitprop had wonder-working properties, however, did not seem to translate into meaningful improvements in propaganda work on the ground. During the last two years of the war, Party investigators continued to encounter the same

³⁹ APRK f. 708, o. 7/1, d. 662, l. 1-4.

⁴⁰ “Dokladnaia o propagandistskoi i agitatsionnoi rabote s 1.1. k 1.6.1944,” APRK f. 708, o. 8, d. 1265, l. 1-12.

problems debilitating agitprop work among Kazakhs that they complained about in 1941-1943. For example, a report delivered at a February 1944 Party meeting dedicated to agitprop in Almaty Province noted that the residents of only two out of 28 collective farms in Zhambyl district had heard lectures and reports delivered in Kazakh.⁴¹ The reason for this failure was all too familiar - the provincial Party committee was in the habit of sending Russian agitprop workers to these collective farms. Even when Kazakh propagandists were available, they often lacked the Kazakh-language materials needed to conduct their work effectively. An inspection brigade sent by the Central Committee of the Kazakh Communist Party in January 1944, for example, reported with alarm that there were almost no Kazakh-language translations of Stalin's books available in the districts of Aqtöbe Province.⁴² Even as the war ended, the Central Committee of the Kazakh Communist Party stubbornly refused to acknowledge that it had placed local propagandists in an impossible situation by expecting them to intensify agitprop work with paltry resources. This lack of support transformed the Party's effort to spread its message into an increasingly chimerical undertaking.

By 1945, it was clear to Abdykalykov, Aleksandrov, and other Agitprop officials in Moscow and Almaty that local agitators were failing to conduct effective propaganda work in the Kazakh *aul* and in the republic's cities. In its decrees and official pronouncements, the Central Committee of the Kazakh Communist Party never deviated from its objective of propagandizing in every province and every settlement in the republic, especially in those regions populated by Kazakhs. Paradoxically, the more that the leaders of the Soviet and Kazakh Parties' proclaimed

⁴¹ "Vypiska iz doklada tov. Loseva na oblastnom agitpropsoveshchaniï ot 16.2.1944," APRK f. 708, o. 8, d. 1275, l. 48-52.

⁴² "Dokladnaia zapiska o sostoianii massovo-politicheskoi raboty v Aktubinskoi oblasti," January 30, 1944. APRK f. 708, o. 8, d. 1275, l. 12-33.

that effective agitprop was a vital prerequisite for maintaining large-scale economic production, the more obvious it became that these bodies were failing to assign the personnel and resources needed to sustain the propaganda campaign. Rather than assessing the situation objectively, the Kazakh Party leadership explained away shortcomings in propaganda work by resorting to a strategy that was all too familiar to Stalinist bureaucrats - blaming local officials for their failure to satisfy the impossible demands of officials in Moscow and regional capitals like Almaty.

An (Islamic) and Soviet Community of Nations: Propaganda Narratives in Wartime Kazakhstan

From 1941 to 1945, the Kazakh Communist Party developed several intertwined propaganda narratives designed to inspire the Kazakh population to achieve ever-greater heights of labor exertion. During this period, Aleksandrov and other Agitprop officials in Moscow enjoined agitprop workers in the national republics to modify their propaganda materials to conform to the “national particularities” of these regions, especially areas occupied by the Nazis.⁴³ At the same time, the Agitprop administration demanded strict adherence to the Soviet Communist Party’s general line, which focused on instilling loyalty to the Communist Party and to the Russians.⁴⁴ The need to mobilize the Kazakhs for the war effort opened new institutional and ideological windows for integrating the Kazakh population into the broader Soviet community, even if Party propagandists in Kazakhstan remained constrained by significant logistical and monetary handicaps from 1941 to 1945.

⁴³ See for example “Vozvanie TsK KP(b)U ‘K ukrainskomu narodu,’” 1942, RGASPI f. 17, o. 125, d. 145, l. 20-26. In A. Ia. Livshin and I. B. Orlov (eds.), *Sovetskaia propaganda v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny: “kommunikatsiia ubezhdeniia” i mobilizatsionnye mekhanizmy* (Moscow, 2007), 420-422; “Pis’mo-listovka ‘Otvety kolkhoznikov kolkhoza ‘Serp i molot’ Belorusskoi SSR krovavym banditam Gitleru, Geringu, Gebbel’su i vsem im podobnym,’” 1943, RGASPI f. 17, o. 125, d. 147, l. 3 in *ibid*, 435-436.

⁴⁴ See Shelgunov, “Bol’shevistskaia pechat’ Kazakhstana v gody Otechestvennoi voiny.”

During the war, Islam became a major arena in the ideological struggle for the hearts and minds of the Kazakh population. The wartime relationship between the Soviet Communist Party and government on the one hand and Muslim religious authorities on other contrasted enormously with the hostility that these authorities demonstrated towards Islam during the 1930s. After the beginning of the socialist offensive in 1928, Soviet officials in Central Asia waged an aggressive campaign against Islamic institutions by arresting mullahs and other religious figures, closing down mosques, and confiscating religious endowments (waqfs).⁴⁵ The Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941, however, caused Party and government leaders in Moscow and Almaty to reevaluate their relationship with Muslim religious figures. In August 1941, Skvortsov instructed local agitprop workers in Kazakhstan to utilize the patriotic declarations of the Orthodox and Muslim “clergy” [*dukhovenstvo*] to “induct the faithful into the united struggle against bloody fascism.”⁴⁶ In addition to using Islam as a medium for propaganda, Skvortsov was attempting to counter the influence of “anti-Soviet Muslim clergy” who he claimed were undermining the Soviet war effort by spreading demoralizing rumors under the guise of performing religious ceremonies.⁴⁷ In his directive, Skvortsov described Islam in essentially neutral terms. According to him, local mullahs were capable of using religious ceremonies to pursue either “patriotic” or “anti-Soviet” goals. What mattered was whether these mullahs were under the control of the Kazakh Communist Party and Soviet government and whether their pronouncements combined Islamic and Soviet patriotism in

⁴⁵ For the particulars of the anti-Islamic campaign in Uzbekistan, see Shoshana Keller, *To Moscow, Not Mecca: The Soviet Campaign against Islam in Central Asia, 1917-1941* (Westport, 2001).

⁴⁶ APRK f. 708, o. 5, d. 338, l. 40-42. August 30, 1941.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

a way that intensified the zeal of Muslim industrial workers and collective farmers to labor selflessly for their “socialist motherland.”

Skvortsov’s directive was an early signal that the Kazakh Communist Party intended to forge an alliance between the Party and the republic’s “loyal” Muslim religious figures. In contrast to Kazakh frontline propaganda, which paid virtually no attention to religion, Islamic themes were important elements of Soviet propaganda in wartime Kazakhstan and other regions with large Muslim populations. These propaganda efforts were an important part of the Soviet Communist Party and government’s attempt to institutionalize Islam and coopt Muslim religious figures to assist in the military and labor mobilization campaigns. Most scholarly treatments of the Great Patriotic War mention the official rapprochement between the Soviet regime and the Russian Orthodox Church that Stalin orchestrated in 1942.⁴⁸ Few historians, however, have analyzed the Stalinist regime’s parallel effort to mobilize the Soviet Union’s Muslims.

The campaign to mobilize the Soviet Union’s Muslim populations rapidly encompassed the Central Spiritual Administration for the Administration of Muslims (TsDUM) in Ufa, the Soviet version of the Islamic Spiritual Assembly established by Catherine the Great in 1788.⁴⁹ The administration worked under the close supervision of the NKVD and the Soviet Communist Party to produce propaganda for the Soviet Union’s “Muslim faithful.” Like propagandists working for the Soviet and Kazakh Communist Parties, TsUDUM officials intended for their “appeals” [*obrashcheniia*] to demonize the Nazi invaders and inspire Soviet patriotism. What was unique about TsUDUM’s propaganda was that it drew on a rich litany of themes derived from Islamic history and theology. For instance, in September 1942 Deputy People’s

⁴⁸ See for example Werth, *Russia at War*, 429-438.

⁴⁹ Yaacov Ro’i, *Islam in the Soviet Union: From the Second World War to Gorbachev* (New York, 2000), 100-101.

Commissar of the Soviet NKVD Bogdan Kobulov asked the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party to distribute an appeal composed by TsUDUM's muftis to the Muslim faithful of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan.⁵⁰ This appeal compared Nazi travesties in the Crimea and North Caucasus to the destruction of Al-Andalus by the Christian kingdoms and to the depredations of the Crusading armies in the Holy Land. Citing the Koran and several of Muhammad's hadiths, TsUDUM called on the Soviet Union's Muslim faithful to fight and labor "for the liberation of the great Motherland, of all humanity, and of the Muslim world from the yoke of the fascist scoundrels [*zlodei*]."

The Soviet Union's muftis continued issuing similar directives in 1943, the year the Supreme Soviet ordered the division of TsUDUM into four regional Islamic spiritual directorates, one of which was the Directorate of the Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan (SADUM) based in Tashkent. The Uzbek Mufti Eshon Boboxon ibn Abdulmajidxon led this directorate.⁵¹ At SADUM's founding conference in October 1943, the organization's Presidium declared that its primary tasks were to manage religious matters among Central Asian Muslims, satisfy "their needs in religious issues", and provide oversight over registered Islamic societies.⁵² SADUM was also heavily involved in the mobilizational effort, to the point where mobilizing Muslims for combat and labor became its major *raison d'être*.⁵³ In October 1943, NKGB head

⁵⁰ RGASPI f. 17, o. 6, d. 106, l. 78-84 (Russian version); l. 85-108 (Tatar version).

⁵¹ The three other Muslim Spiritual Boards attended to the religious needs of European and Siberian Muslims, Muslims in the North Caucasus, and Muslims in the Transcaucasus respectively. See Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union*, 100-114.

⁵² *Ibid*, 104-106.

⁵³ Here I am disagreeing with Adeb Khalid's argument that Soviet authorities assented to the establishment of SADUM in order to maintain bureaucratic oversight over Islamic religious activity and prevent it from going underground. Khalid, *Islam after Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia* (Berkeley, 2014), 78-79. The need to mobilize Central Asian Muslims by giving Soviet propaganda an Islamic coloration was probably the most important factor that contributed to the creation of SADUM.

Vsevolod Merkulov sent an appeal written by SADUM's mullahs to Soviet Information Bureau head Aleksandr Shcherbakov so he could approve its dissemination to Muslims in Central Asia, the Crimea, Turkey and the Arabic-speaking world.⁵⁴ Much like the appeal penned by TsUDUM clerics in September 1942, this SADUM proclamation excoriated the Nazis for slaughtering the peaceful inhabitants of the Crimea and North Caucasus and for trampling on the culture and Islamic religion of these peoples. According to this epistle, Hitler planned to “annihilate the national culture of the peoples of Turkestan and Kazakhstan” and incinerate the “cultural and scientific treasures” contained in the libraries of Tashkent, Almaty, Frunze, and other Central Asian cities.

The author(s) of this proclamation made it clear that there could be only one response to the Nazi threat – a continued, merciless struggle against the Wehrmacht.⁵⁵ The proclamation concluded by reminding its readers that the “Muslims of Turkestan,” together with all Soviet peoples, had already sent their favorite sons to wage an “all-out holy war” [*sviashchennyi gazavat*] against the enemy, and they would win this war “with the help of almighty God [*Allakh*] and with the spiritual protection of his great prophet Muhammad.” This appeal to the Muslim faithful was unprecedented because it did not assume any contradiction between fighting for one's Islamic faith and fighting for the Soviet Union – according to SADUM, these two objectives were one in the same. During the war, SADUM and state security officials like Kobulov and Merkulov created an institutional and ideological space for the articulation of identities that combined Islamic beliefs and Soviet patriotism in new ways.⁵⁶ Indeed, this was the

⁵⁴ RGASPI f. 17, o. 6, d. 188, l. 22-30.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ This argument supports the findings of Eren Tasar in “Islamically Informed Soviet Patriotism in Postwar Kyrgyzstan,” *Cahiers du monde russe*, vol. 52 (2-3); (2011), 387-404. Unlike Tasar, however, I am agnostic as to whether Central Asians internalized hybrid Soviet-Muslim identities during and after the war.

first time that Soviet authorities appealed to Central Asians explicitly as Muslims and not just as Soviet citizens who were Kazakhs, Uzbeks, or members of another nationality.

It is important to note that although the leaders of the Soviet and Kazakh Communist Parties frequently disseminated texts from TsUDUM and SADUM to the Kazakh population during the war, the wartime propaganda produced by the Kazakh Communist Party itself was completely secular in content. These religious and secular narratives existed side by side but they had different institutional origins - what linked them was their common focus on fostering Soviet patriotism. The appeals of TsUDUM and SADUM did advocate defending the global Islamic community (the *Umma* in Kazakh), but in general, these proclamations focused overwhelmingly on patriotic appeals to protect Muslims in Crimea, the North Caucasus, and Central Asia – populations that were both Muslim and Soviet.

What did the Soviet patriotism referred to in TsUDUM and SADUM's propaganda materials mean in wartime Kazakhstan? Chapter Two argued that Kazakh frontline propagandists consciously blurred the distinction between the Soviet Union and Russia and conflated loyalty to Russia with loyalty to the Soviet Union as a whole. In PURKKA's formulation, the conceptual relationship between Russia and the non-Russian regions was hierarchical and vertical - Russia was the past and present elder brother of the non-Russian peoples and the Russians were the leading nation of the Soviet Union. Like PURKKA agitators, propagandists in wartime Kazakhstan often described the relationship between the Kazakhs and the Russians as a component of the "friendship of peoples." Stalin introduced this important ideological concept in 1935 and Party propagandists disseminated it to all Soviet regions during the late 1930s and early 1940s. According to the friendship of peoples doctrine, conflict between the different national groups inhabiting the Soviet Union, and especially between Russians and

non-Russians, was a relic of the past that had been erased by the socialist nationality policies of the Communist Party.⁵⁷ The historian Terry Martin argues that Stalin focused on the idea of the friendship of peoples as a way to transition away from the ideological and institutional struggle against “great power chauvinism” (i.e. Russian nationalism) to portraying the Russians as the de facto leaders of the multinational Soviet Union. According to Martin, the Soviet Communist Party and government never stopped promoting the national identities of non-Russian groups, but the idea of a Russian-dominated friendship of peoples became so central to official expressions of identity that this friendship became, in effect, the Soviet Union’s “imagined community.”⁵⁸

The wartime propaganda materials produced by the Kazakh Communist Party strongly adhered to the Soviet Communist Party’s general line about the leading position of the Russians in the Soviet multinational family. As the war progressed, however, the Kazakh Party’s Agitprop Section simultaneously intensified its efforts to promote cultural and political links between Kazakhstan and other Soviet regions populated by non-Russians. In this propagandistic narrative, the Russians were not just the leaders of the Soviet Union – Russia was also a bridge that connected Kazakhstan with the other national regions. Kazakh Party propagandists did not portray the relationship between the Kazakhs and the other Soviet peoples in terms of “elder brother” and “younger brother” as they did with the Russians and Kazakhs. Instead, they depicted the “friendship” between the Kazakhs and the other Soviet peoples as a horizontal relationship based on equality and a common Soviet identity. From 1941 to 1945, the Kazakh Communist Party became increasingly insistent that this friendship was a key source of Soviet

⁵⁷ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 432-461.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 461.

strength in the war against German fascism and racism. This effort to promote a sense of identification with the multinational Soviet community complemented efforts by Party propagandists to inspire loyalty among Soviet citizens by breaking down the distinction between the Soviet Motherland on the one hand and the family, hometown, village, and factory on the other.⁵⁹ By attempting to combine allegiance to the vast Soviet Motherland with local loyalties, Kazakh Communist Party leaders constructed a novel propagandistic narrative that brought Kazakhstan's place in the Soviet community of nations into sharp relief. This narrative also became the ideological basis for the articulation of a pan-Soviet identity among the Kazakh people.⁶⁰

High-level contacts between the leaders of Kazakhstan and the Soviet Union's other national republics, of course, were not unusual before the Great Patriotic War. For example, in January 1941, Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Georgia Filipp Makharadze, Chairman of the Georgian Sovnarkom Valerian Bakradze, and First Secretary of the Georgian Communist Party Kandid Charkviani sent a telegram to Skvortsov requesting that he travel to Tbilisi to participate in the celebrations of the 20th anniversary of the establishment of Soviet power in Georgia.⁶¹ It is likely that this request was genuine, but it also had a strongly perfunctory quality. For example, the telegram failed to specify why it was important for Skvortsov in particular to attend the Tbilisi celebrations. The Georgian leaders easily could have addressed this telegram to any first

⁵⁹ See Lisa A. Kirschenbaum, "'Our City, Our Hearths, Our Families': Local Loyalties and Private Life in Soviet World War II Propaganda," *Slavic Review*, vol. 59 (4): (Winter, 2000), 825-847.

⁶⁰ This argument challenges Timothy Blauvelt's assertion that Khrushchev was the first Communist Party leader to promote a common Soviet identity among non-Russian groups. See his "Military Mobilisation and National Identity in the Soviet Union," 60. The Communist Party clearly attempted to foster a common Soviet identity among national minorities during the war, which was a continuation of pre-war propaganda efforts.

⁶¹ APRK f. 708, o. 5, d. 158, l. 2. January 29, 1941. There is no document in this *delo* indicating whether Skvortsov fulfilled this request and travelled to Tbilisi.

Party secretary in the Soviet Union because the invitation did not mention anything specific about the relationship between Georgia and Kazakhstan.⁶² Along with this telegram, Skvortsov received a small Georgian-language pamphlet describing the history of the Georgian SSR.⁶³ It was unlikely that Skvortsov or anyone else in the Kazakh Communist Party Central Committee could read this pamphlet, but apparently, this was not a major concern for the Georgian officials who sent it to Almaty. If they genuinely wished for the Kazakh republican leaders to comprehend the pamphlet, it seems that they would have included a Russian-language translation.

After the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, Kazakh Communist Party propagandists intensified their focus on the friendship of peoples doctrine as part of their mobilizational campaign. These efforts were far much more concrete and substantive than prewar attempts to forge high-level connections between Party-state apparatchiki in the national regions. During the first three years of the war, the Kazakh Communist Party also used the friendship of peoples narrative to justify Russia's leading position in the Soviet family of nations. A July 1941 *Kazakhstanskaia pravda* article about the friendship of peoples made absolutely no mention of Kazakhstan's relationship with other non-Russian regions in the Soviet Union.⁶⁴ Instead, this article focused on the "enormous help" provided by the Russians to the "backward and oppressed nations [*natsii*]" of the former tsarist empire. According to this author, the Soviet Union was a "united and mighty state" [*gosudarstvo*] because the Communist Party and Soviet power [*sovetskaia vlast'*] "invested enormous funds to construct factories, plants,

⁶² It is entirely possible that this was a formulaic telegram sent to Party leaders in other Soviet republics, the only change being the name of the addressee.

⁶³ APRK f. 708, o. 5, d. 158, l. 3-8.

⁶⁴ "Velikaia druzhba narodov SSSR." *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, July 25, 1941, 2.

railroads, highways, water canals, cultural institutions, universities, technical colleges, sanatoriums, hospitals, retirement homes [*rodil'nye doma*] and lyceums” in the non-Russian republics. This “brotherly assistance” gave the Russians the right to call themselves “the first among equal peoples of the USSR” [*Velikii russkii narod pervyi sredi ravnykh narodov SSSR*].⁶⁵ In this paradoxical formulation, the friendship of peoples was a euphuism for Russian domination and supremacy within the Soviet Union.

The Agitprop Section of the Kazakh Communist Party continued to expound the essential elements of this propaganda narrative into 1942. One *Kazakhstanskaia pravda* article published in December 1942, for instance, claimed that the Kazakh people owed the Bolsheviks and “the best sons” of the Russian people such as Mikhail Frunze, Valerian Kuibyshev, and Vasiliï Chapaev for protecting them from the “Kazakh nationalists” and foreign interventionists during the Russian Civil War.⁶⁶ According to the article, these commanders prevented these anti-Soviet forces from sowing “national hatred and enmity” on the Kazakh steppe by laying the foundations for an “internationalist friendship” between the Kazakhs and the Russians. This friendship culminated in the establishment of “a national Kazakh state” (the Kazakh ASSR) – an unprecedented development in the history of the Kazakh people.⁶⁷ The core message of this article was clear – the Kazakhs owed an enormous debt to the Russians and Bolsheviks for their

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ “Kazakhskii narod v velikom sodruzhestve sovetkikh narodov,” *ibid*, December 4, 1942, 2. This mention of “Kazakh nationalists” is almost certainly a reference to the Alash Orda government. Frunze was a Red Army commander who directed the Soviet takeover of Central Asia. Kuibyshev (as a political commissar) and Chapaev (as a Red Army commander) also played important roles in directing the Red Army’s military campaigns in Central Asia during the Russian Civil War.

⁶⁷ It is certainly debatable whether the Kazakh ASSR was the first “national state” in Kazakh history. While it is true that no Western-style nation-state existed on the Kazakh steppe before 1925, Kazakhs established several indigenous social and political institutions during the pre-colonial period. The official position of the current Kazakhstani government is that the first Kazakh state was the Kazakh Khanate established in 1456. See “Kazakhskoi gosudarstvennosti v 2015 godu ispolnitsiia 550 let – Nazarbaev,” *Tengri News*. October 22, 2014.

national existence, and the most logical way to repay this debt was to fight the Nazis on the battlefields of the Great Patriotic War and labor selflessly on the Soviet home front.

Taking their cue from Agitprop officials in Moscow, Kazakh Communist Party propagandists made it abundantly clear that the Kazakhs were not the only Soviet nationality that the Russian Bolsheviks had liberated. According to Kazakh Party propaganda materials published in 1942, the Russians played an analogous role in liberating the tsarist empire's other non-Russian peoples, establishing political and cultural institutions in their territories, and developing the economies of their new republics. By highlighting the role of the Russians in establishing these national territories, the Kazakh Communist Party was reminding the Kazakhs that they inhabited the same supranational community as other Soviet nationalities. A central component of this narrative was that the Russians and the Communist Party were the key links that connected the different peoples inhabiting this community.

This ideological perspective framed a special December 1942 issue of *Kazakhstanskaia pravda* dedicated to the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Ukrainian SSR.⁶⁸ One of the articles in this issue provided an in-depth description of the Civil War-era struggle of the “Ukrainian workers and peasants” to liberate their territory from the German occupiers, Ukrainian nationalist organizations like the Central Rada and the Directorate, and the “counterrevolutionary-nationalist bands” of Anton Denikin, Simon Petliura, and Nestor Makhno.⁶⁹ Interestingly, this article granted noticeably more agency to the Ukrainians in their

⁶⁸ *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*. December 25, 1942.

⁶⁹ “25 let Ukrainskoi Sovetskoi Sotsialisticheskoi respubliki,” *ibid*, 2. The Rada was a parliamentary body that led an independent Ukrainian state from 1917 to 1918 until the German puppet Pavlo Skoropads’kii dissolved it. The Ukrainian Directorate was a left-wing Ukrainian nationalist organization that allied with the Bolsheviks to overthrow the Skoropads’kii regime in December 1918. Simon Petliura ruled the directory from February 1919 until the Bolsheviks defeated him in late 1920 and established Soviet power in Ukraine. From January 1919 to August 1921 Nestor Makhno led an anarchist army that fought against Ukrainian nationalists, White forces, and the

national-liberation struggle than *Kazakhstanskaia pravda* did when describing the Kazakh anti-colonial conflict during the Civil War (see pages 105-107). However, these references to the “bravery and fortitude” of the Ukrainian workers and peasants did not imply a substantial deviation from the friendship of peoples line. After all, the article made it explicitly clear that the “flowering” [*rastsvet*] of Ukrainian culture and language was only possible thanks to the “brotherly help” and leadership of the Russian Bolsheviks. This newspaper issue also contained a paean to the triumphs of Soviet power in Ukraine written by the prominent Ukrainian poet Volodimir Sosiura.⁷⁰ Although *Kazakhstanskaia pravda* published this poem in Ukrainian, it contained so many Russian cognates as to be easily understandable to any literate Russophone.

According to this narrative, the Russians and the Communist Party were the key elements that connected Kazakhstan and Ukraine – two republics that otherwise had little in common. The connections between Kazakhstan and Ukraine became clearer in two articles published in *Kazakhstanskaia pravda* and *Sotsialistīk Qazaqstan* in 1944.⁷¹ Rather than focusing on the unifying role of the Russians, these pieces highlighted the economic connections between the two republics that had proliferated since the Red Army invaded Ukraine in the fall of 1943. According to these articles, Kazakhstan was contributing considerably to the reconstruction of Ukraine’s economy by sending tens of thousands of cattle, sheep, and horses to the liberated

Bolsheviks. Denikin was the principal White general in Ukraine and southern Russia during the Civil War. This propaganda tract deliberately ignored the enormous ideological and political differences between these groups. Their only commonality was that they all eventually fought against Bolshevik control. Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923, Revised Edition* (Cambridge MA, 1997), 53-75, 114-126.

⁷⁰ V. Sosiura, “Ukraīni,” *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*. December 25, 1942, 2. Sosiura began writing Ukrainian lyrical poems in 1920 that extolled the Bolshevik Revolution. His poems of the 1930s glorified socialist construction and Soviet patriotism. During the war, he wrote several panegyric poems about the Soviet Red Army soldier. A. M. Prokhorov (ed.), *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* (New York, 1983) vol. 24, 330-331.

⁷¹ “Kazakhstan – Ukraina,” *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*. May 5, 1944, 2; “Kengestīk Ukrainanyng uly merkesi,” *Sotsialistīk Qazaqstan*. October 17, 1944, 1.

republic's collective farms, as well as hundreds of agricultural experts and “an entire army of Kazakhstani railroad workers” – 7,000 people including 150 railroad managers.

The economic and humanitarian connections between Kazakhstan and Ukraine elaborated in these articles were more concrete examples of membership in a unified political community than the historical similarities between the two republics highlighted in previous issues of *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*. Beginning in 1944, Kazakh Communist Party propagandists pointed often to the “brotherly assistance” [*bratskaia pomoshch*] provided to Ukraine, the Baltic republics, and Moldova by the workers and collective farmers of Kazakhstan, as well as to the bravery of Kazakh soldiers fighting to liberate these republics, as evidence of the friendship between Kazakhstan and these regions.⁷² The Kazakh Communist Party continued to describe the Russians and the Bolsheviks as the principal architects of this friendship, but by the end of the war, the editors of *Kazakhstanskaia pravda* and *Sotsialistīk Qazaqstan* increasingly focused on actual connections between Kazakhstan and other Soviet republics rather than historical ones.

The liberation of the Soviet Union's western republics thus provided Kazakh Party agitators with an opportunity to insert these regions into the political and cultural imaginary of the Kazakh population. By 1944, Kazakh soldiers were fighting to liberate these regions and Kazakh laborers were sacrificing a great deal to restore the economies of the western borderlands. This military and economic shift to the west prompted Kazakh Party propagandists to place the liberated regions at the center of their propaganda narrative. It was important, after all, for Kazakh soldiers and workers to understand that their sacrifices were benefiting fellow Soviet citizens. According to the Kazakh Communist Party, Soviet patriots in Kazakhstan were

⁷² I. Laponogov, “Kishinev,” *Sotsialistīk Qazaqstan*. August 27, 1944, 4; P.B Barannikov and A. Beilin, “Riga baghytynda,” *ibid.* October 4, 1944, 1; “Pribaltikada āskerlerīmīzdīng tamasha zhengīsī,” *ibid.* October 11, 1944, 1; “Estoniia Sovet Sotsialistīk Respublikasynda nemīs-fashist basqynshylardyng īstegen zhauzydyktary turaly,” *ibid.* December 2, 1944, 2.

not just supposed to be concerned about the development of socialism in their own republic; the security and economic development of all Soviet republics were their responsibility as well. The military struggle against the Nazi invaders and the subsequent effort to restore the ruined economies of the western republics placed this responsibility in sharp relief.

The Kazakh Communist Party did not confine its propaganda efforts to expanding the geographical perspective of the Kazakhs to encompass the Soviet Union's western regions. In 1945, the Kazakh Communist Party and Kazakh government sent Deputy Chairman of the Kazakh Supreme Soviet Sheker Ermagambetova to Ashgabat to represent the republic at the celebrations in honor of the 20th anniversary of the creation of the Turkmen SSR.⁷³

Ermagambetova's speech to the Turkmen Supreme Soviet, which was recorded by stenographers and sent back to Almaty for use in the Kazakh Communist Party's agitprop campaign, reiterated many of the core themes about the friendship of peoples disseminated by the Soviet and Kazakh Communist Parties during the war.⁷⁴ According to the minutes of the Turkmen Supreme Soviet session, Ermagambetova stressed that this celebration was not just a Turkmen affair - it was a celebration "of the entire Soviet people" and a testament to the "total victory of the ideology of the friendship of peoples over the ideology of nationalism and racial hatred espoused by the Hitlerites."

Continuing her speech, Ermagambetova reminded the assembled deputies that the Turkmen owed their "national existence" to the Communist Party and the Russian people, who she described as the architects of Turkmenistan's economic development and the liberators of

⁷³ Ermagambetova was born in 1903 in an *aul* in Kzyl-Orda Province. During the 1930s, the Kazakh Communist Party trained her as an agricultural specialist. She served in a variety of government and Party posts in Kzyl-Orda Province until she was elected Deputy Chairperson of the Kazakh Supreme Soviet in 1938. Ashimbaev, *Kto est' kto v Kazakhstane*, 402.

⁷⁴ "Vystuplenie zamestitelia predsedatelia Verkhovnogo Soveta Kazakhskoi SSR na iubilenoi sessii Verkhovnogo Soveta Turkmenskoi SSR," APRK f. 708, o. 7/1, d. 678, l. 28-34.

Turkmen women. Ermagambetova concluded her speech by asserting that all Soviet peoples – “the Russians, Belarusians, Turkmen, Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Karakalpaks, Kyrgyz, Tajiks, Azerbaijanis, Georgians, and all the peoples of our country” were sons and daughters of one mother – the [Soviet] Motherland.” This common familial connection, Ermagambetova asserted, was the impetus behind the common Kazakh-Turkmen effort to destroy the fascist enemy through feats of arms at the frontlines and labor on the home front.

The themes elaborated by Ermagambetova in Ashgabat pervaded the speeches of the delegates from Kazakhstan who attended the 1945 jubilees of the other “Eastern” republics in the Soviet Union. The speech of Kazakhstan’s representative to the jubilee of the founding of the Bashkir ASSR, which was also widely disseminated by the Kazakh Communist Party inside Kazakhstan, formulaically repeated the assertion that the Russians and Bolsheviks saved both the Bashkirs and Kazakhs from national annihilation.⁷⁵ At the same time, this speech highlighted historical connections between the Bashkir and Kazakh peoples facilitated by the Russians but forged by the Bashkirs and Kazakhs themselves. According to this speech, the Bashkirs had “walked the most difficult historical path” of all Soviet peoples because rival tribal peoples and tsarist colonizers had exploited them with particular brutality. In an admission that was rare for 1945 because of the near universally positive manner in which Soviet propagandists depicted tsarist Russia at this time (see pages 103-104), this speaker openly acknowledged the exploitative nature of tsarist rule on the Bashkir steppe [*grabitel’skaia politika tsarizma*]. He or she maintained that the tsarist government attempted to sow enmity between the Bashkirs and Kazakhs by using their servant, the Bashkir “traitor” Colonel Tevkelev to deceive Ābīlqaiyr khan

⁷⁵ APRK f. 708, o. 7/1, d. 678, l. 35-42. The report on the proceedings of the jubilee does not elaborate who delivered this speech.

about the peaceful intentions of the tsarist government, leaving the Kazakh Small Horde open to tsarist takeover in 1731.⁷⁶ According to the speech, the “Bashkir and Kazakh toilers” rebuffed this attempt to drive a wedge between the two peoples by joining with the Russian peasants in their struggle against the autocracy. From 1731 to 1917, these groups fought shoulder to shoulder against the “landlords, capitalists, Kazakh *bais*, and Bashkir princes [*murzy*]” in a struggle for liberation that culminated in the establishment of Soviet power on the Bashkir and Kazakh steppes.

The end of this address to the Bashkir delegates highlighted the military and economic contributions of the Bashkir people to the Soviet war effort and the fraternity between Bashkir and Kazakh soldiers on the frontlines of the Great Patriotic War. For this speaker, this fraternity was the culmination of a centuries-long alliance between the two peoples facilitated by the Russian peasants and the Bolsheviks. The historical alliance between the Bashkirs and Kazakhs was an important element of this propagandistic narrative, but the Kazakh Communist Party likely highlighted this alliance to establish the background for the brotherly friendship between the two peoples that was flourishing during the Great Patriotic War. This narrative focus was part of the Kazakh Party leadership’s intensified effort to disseminate an awareness of the wider Soviet world to the Kazakh people.

During the war, the Russians remained an essential component of the friendship of peoples doctrine, but Russia’s role subtly changed from that of leader of the Soviet multinational family to historical link between Kazakhstan and the other non-Russian republics. By 1945, the Kazakh Communist Party continued to treat the friendship of peoples as the primary “imagined community” of the Kazakhs, but the war provided Party propagandists with an opportunity to

⁷⁶ Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, 31.

make this friendship far more concrete than it had been during the prewar decade. This gradual shift in narrative focus was broadly consistent with the Sovietization of Kazakh frontline propaganda that took place in 1944-1945 and that was described in Chapter Two. By the end of the war, both PURKKA and the Kazakh Communist Party were focusing on the Soviet Motherland as the conceptual anchor of their propaganda in order to promote an unambiguously Soviet identity among the Kazakhs. References to the multinational structure of this Motherland reminded the Kazakhs that they were part of a “liberated” fraternity united in purpose under the putatively beneficent oversight of the Communist Party.

Conclusion

From 1941 to 1945, the Soviet and Kazakh Communist Parties sought to integrate the peoples of Kazakhstan into the war effort as soldiers and laborers, and Party officials saw agitprop as a key device for accomplishing this objective. Propaganda became so vital to the process of labor mobilization that it acquired wonder-working qualities in the eyes of Party leaders. The republic’s agitprop apparatus, however, never functioned at the level prescribed by Agitprop officials, which was a consequence of logistical handicaps, the difficulties inherent in reaching isolated Kazakh communities, and the inability of local propagandists to adapt to the linguistic needs of the republic’s large Kazakh population. The gap between the stated importance of agitprop among the Kazakhs and the actual capacities of the Party propaganda network only grew wider as the war progressed.

This failure had more to do with logistical, material, and personnel shortcomings than with the indifference of the Kazakh Communist Party leadership. The military, economic, and cultural connections that proliferated between Kazakhstan and the rest of the Soviet Union

during the war presented the Kazakh Communist Party with a unique opportunity to concretize the idea of the friendship of peoples and convincingly elaborate the place of the Kazakhs within this friendship. In addition, the imperatives of mobilization prompted Soviet leaders to institutionalize Islam and integrate this institution into social and intellectual life in Kazakhstan and other Soviet regions. The overarching goal of these measures, like PURKKA's propaganda campaign among Kazakh soldiers, was to inculcate a deep-seated allegiance to the Soviet Union among Kazakhs laboring on the home front.

The Kazakh Communist Party lacked the capacity to accomplish all of its propaganda-related aims, but the war nevertheless opened a unique conceptual and institutional window for expanding the mental landscape of the Kazakh people. It is not coincidental that postwar propaganda tracts published in the Soviet Union and Kazakhstan frequently highlighted the “internationalist” cooperation between different Soviet nationalities during the Great Patriotic War as the brightest manifestation of the friendship of peoples doctrine.⁷⁷ By portraying this cooperation as an important component of Soviet-Kazakh identity, the Kazakh Communist Party's wartime propaganda campaign served as the ideological complement to concurrent effort to integrate the Kazakhs into all-Union administrative structures as soldiers and laborers. This campaign to integrate the Kazakhs contrasted mightily with how wartime Party and government officials treated the republic's other, less visible nationalities – the Soviet Germans and the North Caucasians deported to Kazakhstan from 1941 to 1944. This dissertation will now turn to this especially tragic episode in the republic's wartime history.

⁷⁷ See for example B. Batyrov, *Formirovanie i razvitie sotsialisticheskikh natsii v SSSR* (Moscow, 1962); T. U. Usubaliev, *Druzhiba narodov – nashi bestsennoe zavoevanie* (Moscow, 1977).

Chapter 5 – The Peoples In-Between: Deportation and Labor Mobilization in Kazakhstan

In the summer and fall of 1941, the Soviet NKVD deported as many as 905,000 Soviet Germans to the Urals, Siberian, and Central Asian regions.¹ Many of these starved, exhausted, and sick Germans arrived at their destinations only after several agonizing weeks. One of these deported Germans, a woman named Frida Wolter, described her arrival in the following terms: “Chairmen from various collective farms met our train convoy [*eshelon*] when it arrived at the Aleisk [Train] Station [in the Altai *krai*]. As if in a slave market, they yelled out ‘Are there any blacksmiths? Who is a blacksmith? Step forward! Carpenters! We need carpenters! Tractor drivers, mechanics – come here! We need an accountant or bookkeeper! Is there no agronomist or livestock specialist?’”²

Ruthless labor exploitation dominates the recollections of many Soviet citizens exiled to Kazakhstan and the Soviet Union’s other eastern regions during the Great Patriotic War. Frida Wolter’s comparison of arriving in exile to entering a slave market is especially apt, since Party and government officials determined the place of the deportees in Soviet society, in significant measure, by their ability to work and benefit the economy. During the war, Party and government officials in Kazakhstan did not attempt to integrate the deported nationalities into Soviet society as they did with the Kazakhs. The status of these exiles remained far more ambiguous, but it was clear that they occupied the lowest rung in the republic’s national hierarchy.

¹ This estimate is given by Pavel Polian in *Against Their Will: The History and Geography of Forced Migrations in the USSR* (Budapest, 2004), 136-137.

² Gerhard Wolter, “Tri kruga dantova ada,” in Svetlana Alieva (ed.) *Tak eto bylo: natsional’nye repressii v SSSR 1919-1952 gody: v 3-kh tomakh* (Moscow, 1993) vol. 1, 150.

During the war, the NKVD forcefully relocated over two million Soviet citizens from their home regions.³ From 1941 to 1945, the NKVD deported approximately 462,694 Soviet Germans to Kazakhstan.⁴ In 1943-1944, the NKVD exiled 45,529 Karachays, 405,192 Chechens and Ingush, and 21,750 Balkars to the Kazakh republic.⁵ These deportees resided in “special-settlements,” a terrible euphemism introduced by the OGPU in 1930 to refer to the makeshift villages built by deported kulaks in regions of exile.⁶ Party and NKVD officials in Moscow and Kazakhstan pursued a range of policies designed to isolate the deported nationalities and differentiate them from non-repressed groups such as the Kazakhs and Russians. The republic’s special-settlements, however, never became distinct geographic and administrative zones existing completely outside the bounds of “free” Soviet society. This chapter argues instead that the wartime special-settlements were administrative interstitial spaces simultaneously existing inside and outside the boundaries of Soviet society.

Scholarly interpretations of the wartime national deportations have varied widely. According to some historians, these forced relocations were acts of genocide perpetrated by racist Soviet leaders who sought to annihilate these minority groups by killing all their members.⁷ Another group of historians maintains that Stalin, Beria, and other key Soviet leaders

³ N. F. Bugai (ed.), *Iosif Stalin – Lavrentiiu Berii: “Ikh nado deportirovat”*: dokumenty, fakty, kommentarii (Moscow, 1992), 14.

⁴ For this estimate, see Michael Herceg Westren, “Nations in Exile: “The Punished Peoples” in Soviet Kazakhstan, 1941-1961,” PhD dissertation (University of Chicago, 2012), 3-4.

⁵ *Ibid.* During the war, the NKVD also deported 34,785 Soviet citizens to Kazakhstan from Kalmykia, Crimea, and Georgia.

⁶ Lynne Viola, *The Unknown Gulag: The Lost World of Stalin’s Special Settlements* (Oxford, 2007), 2-3. These special-settlements were often located in isolated regions of the Soviet Union such as Kazakhstan and Siberia and their inhabitants labored as farmers, miners, and lumbers, often while facing abominable conditions of exposure, disease, and hunger.

exiled these groups to “erase” their national existence by dissolving their national territories and eliminating their linguistic and cultural institutions.⁸ Other scholars point to the geopolitical impetus behind the wartime “national operations,” arguing that Soviet leaders believed that the deported groups constituted an insurgent fifth column that needed to be removed to secure the North Caucasus, Crimea, and other strategic regions in preparation for a future war.⁹ Finally, several historians maintain that Soviet leaders designed the deportations to Sovietize national groups that had strenuously resisted collectivization, integration into educational and Party institutions, and military conscription during the 1930s.¹⁰ For this latter group of scholars, the goals of the deportations were not exclusionary at all - they were attempts to rehabilitate and reintegrate rebellious national groups into the broader Soviet community.

One of the major weaknesses of these otherwise excellent works is that they concentrate so intently on the reasons for the deportations that they neglect to analyze the labor policies of Party and government officials towards the exiles. Katherine Jolluck’s book about the Poles deported from Eastern Poland to Siberia and Central Asia in 1939-1940 is the only major

⁷ Nikolai K Dekker (ed.), *Genocide in the USSR: Studies in Group Destruction* (New York, 1958); J. Otto Pohl, “Stalin’s Genocide against the ‘Repressed Peoples’,” *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 2 (2): (2000), 267-293.

⁸ See in particular Robert Conquest, *The Nation Killers: The Soviet Deportation of Nationalities* (New York, 1970); Aleksandr Nekrich, *The Punished Peoples: The Deportation and Fate of Soviet Minorities at the end of the Second World War* (New York, 1978). Conquest argues that the deportations were a natural result of the ultra-centralizing tendencies of the Soviet state. Nekrich, in contrast, characterizes the deportations as a corruption of essentially sound Leninist nationality policies.

⁹ See especially Alexander Statiev, “The Nature of Anti-Soviet Armed Resistance, 1942-44: The North Caucasus, the Kalmyk Autonomous Republic, and Crimea,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, vol. 6 (20): (2005), 285-318.

¹⁰ Norman M. Naimark, “Ethnic Cleansing between War and Peace,” in Weiner, *Landscaping the Human Garden*, 218-235; V. N. Zemskov, *Spetsposelentsy v SSSR, 1930-1960* (Moscow, 2003); Westren, “Nations in Exile”; Michaela Pohl, “‘It Cannot be that our Graves will be Here’: The Survival of Chechen and Ingush Deportees in Kazakhstan, 1944-1957,” *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 4 (3): (2002), 401-430.

exception to this historiographical tendency.¹¹ In her chapter on labor mobilization among the Poles, Jolluck argues that Soviet leaders “regarded the [Polish] exiles as they did their own population – a resource to be exploited” and as “workers for the socialist state.”¹² At the same time, Jolluck maintains that Soviet authorities perceived these deportees to be “real or potential enemies,” and this view justified their “assignment...to hard physical labor.”¹³ In Jolluck’s formulation, it is not clear whether Soviet officials forced these Poles to work because they were Soviet citizens or because they were members of a suspect national group. This question is important because it sheds light on how the Polish deportees fit into wartime Soviet society. Did Party and government officials see the deportees in essentially the same manner as other Soviet populations, i.e. as sources of labor? Alternatively, did these officials see the Poles as particularly suitable for endless work on collective farms and in other enterprises because they were “enemies” of the Soviet regime? Or perhaps both views simultaneously informed official labor policies towards the Polish exiles?

Extending Jolluck’s analytical approach to the Soviet Germans and North Caucasians deported to Kazakhstan during the war, this chapter asserts that Soviet NKVD officers in Moscow, along with government and Kazakh Communist Party leaders in Almaty, deliberately created an ambiguous judicial and social space to imprison the deportees. The creation of this interstitial space facilitated the exploitation of the special-settlers as laborers and catalyzed their transformation into economic commodities. The creation of this interstitial space was not accidental, but part of the reason for its emergence was that Soviet authorities never developed a

¹¹ Katherine R. Jolluck, *Exile and Identity: Polish Women in the Soviet Union during World War II* (Pittsburgh, 2002).

¹² *Ibid.*, 45-46.

¹³ *Ibid.*

clear plan for settling the deportees and mobilizing them for work.¹⁴ Soviet NKVD officers in Moscow continuously pressed local Party and government officials in Kazakhstan to mobilize the special-settlers for labor to boost economic production. These NKVD officers, however, rarely offered concrete guidance as to how to organize the deportees for labor. This lack of systematic control from Moscow gave local Party and government officials plenty of administrative space to develop their own policies towards the German and North Caucasian special-settlers. Many of these local authorities began to subvert the labor mobilization process, for example by refusing to care for special-settlers whom they perceived to be poor workers. Thanks to this pushback from local officials, the living conditions of the deportees deteriorated, and by the end of the war, their interstitial position became a central fixture of Kazakhstan's society.

Inside and Outside Society: The German Deportees and the Special-Settlements as an Interstitial Space, 1941-1943

The deportation of the Soviet Germans was a direct response to the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union. By August 1941 at the latest, it was clear to the Soviet Communist Party and government that the Nazis would soon overrun regions containing large Soviet German populations.¹⁵ On August 28, 1941, the Soviet Sovnarkom and the Party's Central Committee

¹⁴ The lack of concrete plans for administering the special-settlers was typical of practice inside the Soviet Gulag. As James Harris notes, Gulag administrators in Moscow intentionally articulated vague policies towards inmates in corrective-labor camps and special-settlements to encourage initiative from local Gulag officials. Harris, *The Great Urals*, 106. Arch Getty et al. make a similar point in "Victims of the Soviet Penal System in the Pre-War Years: A First Approach on the Basis of Archival Evidence," *American Historical Review*, vol. 98 (4): (1993), 1017-1049.

¹⁵ The Soviet Germans were mostly the descendants of colonists invited to the Russian Empire by Catherine the Great in the 1760s. Impoverished by the Seven-Years War, these colonists immigrated to Russia from a variety of German-speaking territories to take advantage of agricultural opportunities in the Volga region. About 30,000 Germans arrived in the region in 1766, followed by successive waves of colonists during the next few decades. Fred C. Koch, *The Volga Germans in Russia and the Americas, From 1763 to the Present* (University Park, 1977), 4-10.

ordered the NKVD to deport the inhabitants of the Volga German Republic as well as all Soviet Germans residing in Saratov and Stalingrad provinces to Siberia and Kazakhstan.¹⁶ Two days later, Chairman of the Supreme Soviet Mikhail Kalinin issued a directive claiming that there were “thousands and hundreds of thousands” of spies and saboteurs inside the German Volga Republic awaiting a signal from Germany to initiate a sabotage campaign against Soviet power.¹⁷ Kalinin maintained that in order to prevent the Soviet Germans from damage the war effort and to forestall “serious bloodshed” in the Volga region, it was necessary to deport the entire German population to the East. NKVD troops rounded up the startled and confused Germans and packed them into freight wagons or boats for the long trip to Kazakhstan and Siberia. Disease spread rapidly in these cramped, unsanitary, and often freezing conditions, and the guards accompanying the German deportees sometimes refused to provide them with food for days or even weeks.¹⁸ Because of these inhumane conditions, the surviving special-settlers often arrived in Kazakhstan sick and emaciated. Barely clinging to life, these deportees all too often lacked the materials, vehicles, and strength to build lodgings, gather heating fuel, and perform other tasks necessary for starting new lives in the special-settlements.¹⁹

The special-settlements were part of what the historian Steven Barnes refers to as the Gulag’s “hierarchy of detention.”²⁰ The Section for Labor- and Special-Settlements under the

¹⁶ “Postanovlenie SNK i TsK VKP(b) o pereselenii nemtsev iz respubliki nemtsev povolzh’ia, Saratovskoi i Stalingradskoi oblasti,” August 26, 1941. GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 85, l. 1-6, in O. N. Pabol’ and P. M. Polian (eds.), *Stalinskie deportatsii: 1928-1953* (Moscow, 2005), 288-290. According to this decree, the NKVD was supposed to deport 333,000 Germans to Siberia and 100,000 to Kazakhstan.

¹⁷ “Ukaz PVS #21-60 ‘O pereselenii nemtsev, prozhivaushchikh v raionakh povolzh’ia,” August 28, 1941. GARF f. 7523 (Supreme Soviet of the USSR), o. 4, d. 49, l. 151-152 in Pabol’, *Stalinskie deportatsii*, 299.

¹⁸ Koch, *The Volga Germans*, 286-287.

¹⁹ Irina Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union* (London, 2007), 91.

²⁰ Steven A. Barnes, *Death and Redemption: The Gulag and the Shaping of Soviet Society* (Princeton, 2011), 16-27.

jurisdiction of the Soviet NKVD oversaw the establishment of the deportees in their places of exile. The Section also worked with local Party and soviet officials to monitor the “political attitudes” of the special-settlers and oversee their “labor organization” [*trudovoe ustroistvo*].²¹ The Central Committee of the Kazakh Communist Party was also heavily involved in the deportation process, and Kazakh Party leaders coordinated with local Party secretaries, soviet officials, and local enterprise directors to put special-settlers to work on collective and state farms as well as in factories and mines.²² Collective farm chairpersons and enterprise directors were directly responsible for supplying the deportees with food and shelter and ensuring that they maintained a high level of labor productivity. During the initial phase of deportation, the NKVD usually split German families apart by dividing women from men and exiling them to separate regions. For this reason, women and children constituted a disproportionately large percentage of Kazakhstan’s German special-settlers for much of the war.²³

Although the Gulag administration ran the special-settlements, their regime of confinement differed markedly from the infamous corrective-labor camps described so evocatively by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.²⁴ The special commandant offices [*kommandatury*] were the basic administrative organs of the special-settlement system. In the summer of 1941, Beria ordered the Kazakh NKVD to establish special commandant offices in all regions of exile to

²¹ “Polozhenie ob Otdel’ spetspereselenii NKVD SSSR,” September 1, 1941. GARF f. 9401, o. 1, d. 72, l. 1-2, in A. I. Kokurin and N. V. Petrov (eds.) *Lubianka: organy VChK-OGPU-NKVD-NKGB-MGB-MVD-KGB, 1917-1991: spravochnik* (Moscow, 2003), 617. On January 12, 1944 the Section for Labor- and Special-Settlements was renamed the Section for Special-Settlements (OSP). Iu. N. Afanas’ev and V. P. Kozlov (eds.), *Istoriia stalinskogo Gulaga: konets 1920-kh-pervaia polovina 1950-kh godov: sobranie dokumentov v semi tomakh* (Moscow, 2005) vol. 5, 754.

²² Westren, “‘Nations in Exile’,” 86-87.

²³ Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union*, 87.

²⁴ Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago, 1918-1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation* (New York, 1985).

administer and monitor incoming German special-settlers.²⁵ These special commandant regions were not geographically distinct zones separated from the areas administered by local Party organs and government soviets – they were a special administrative layer grafted onto the existing governing structure by the Kazakh NKVD. In contrast to the relatively isolated corrective-labor camps, the Kazakh NKVD usually attached the special-settlements to villages and collective farms inhabited by Kazakhs, Russians, and other “free” citizens. For this reason, the amount of interaction between special-settlers and non-repressed Soviet citizens was far greater than between corrective-labor camp prisoners and non-prisoners.²⁶

The Kazakh NKVD did not surround the special-settlements with barbed wire, but the freedom of the German deportees was restricted in several ways. On paper, the special-settlers enjoyed “all the rights of Soviet citizens, but with special limitations.”²⁷ For example, special-settlers were supposed to receive equal pay for their work on par with non-deportees. In reality, however, the “special limitations” were a euphuism for the tyrannical authority of Kazakh NKVD commandants and these limitations strongly differentiated deportees from non-deportees. Special-settlers could not leave their regions of exile, change their place of employment, or even marry without the written permission of these commandants.²⁸ Life inside the special-settlements was stricter than outside because Kazakh NKVD officers were particularly quick to arrest German deportees for labor infractions and for moving around Kazakhstan without

²⁵ Larisa Belkovets, *Administrativno-pravovoe polozhenie rossiiskikh nemtsev na spetsposelenii, 1941-1955 gg.: Istoriko-pravovoe issledovanie* (Moscow, 2008), 198-201.

²⁶ Steven A. Barnes, “Soviet Society Confined: The Gulag in the Karaganda Region of Kazakhstan, 1930S-1950S,” Doctoral Dissertation, Stanford University, 2003, 17-31.

²⁷ Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union*, 81.

²⁸ Kh. I. Khutuev, “Rezhim spetsposelenii: Istoricheskii ocherk” in Alieva, *Tak eto bylo: natsional'nye repressii v SSSR: 1919-1952 gody* (Moscow, 1993), vol. 2, 329-332.

authorization.²⁹ In order to enforce the special-settlement regime, the Kazakh NKVD established armed garrisons in all commandant regions with the support of Red Army units.³⁰ NKVD and Red Army troops patrolled these regions to apprehend escaped special-settlers and discourage uprisings.³¹ The German special-settlers often lived side by side with Kazakhs and Slavs, but the Kazakh NKVD constantly reminded the deportees that the Soviet Communist Party and government distrusted them. The fact that Soviet leaders forced the special-settlers to inhabit a legal and administrative grey zone is further evidence that the line between the repressed and non-repressed was not always clear in the Stalinist Soviet Union.³² Indeed, with the dramatic expansion of the special-settlement system in 1941, this line became more blurry than ever before.

Due to the speed of the Nazi blitzkrieg, Kazakhstan's provincial and district officials had very little time to prepare for the arrival of the deported Germans.³³ For example, on September 1, 1941, Skvortsov and Ondasynov gave the provincial Party committees and soviet chairpersons of Semei, Aqmola, North-Kazakhstan, Qostanai, Pavlodar, and East-Kazakhstan provinces only five days to develop concrete plans for organizing arriving German special-settlers.³⁴ It is hardly surprising that Skvortsov and Ondasynov gave their subordinates so little time to prepare

²⁹ Ibid, 331.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ For a description of the activities of these armed units in Almaty Province, see GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 168, l. 19-26. July 27, 1944.

³² For example, Steven Barnes notes that former prisoners and prisoners often worked as administrators in the Gulag's corrective-labor camps. Barnes, *Death and Redemption*, 51-53.

³³ Siegelbaum, *Broad is My Native Land*, 317.

³⁴ "Postanovlenie Sovnarkoma Kazakhskoi SSR i TsK KP(b)K: O meropriiatiakh po realizatsii postanovleniia SNK SSSR i TsK VKP(b) ot 26 avgusta s. g. 'Po priemu pereselenstev-nemtsev iz Saratovskoi, Stalingradskoi oblasti i Respubliki nemtsev Povolzh'ia,'" September 1, 1941. APRK f. 708, o. 1, d. 3, l. 73-76, in T. B. Mitropol'skaia (ed.) *Iz istorii nemtsev Kazakhstana: 1921-1975 gg. Sbornik dokumentov* (Almaty, 1997), 94-96.

lodgings and food for the special-settlers, since the Soviet Communist Party and Soviet Sovnarkom only informed the two republican leaders about the arrival of these Germans on August 26. Soviet NKVD officers often contributed to this bureaucratic muddle by also failing to inform regional NKVD organizations about the arrival of German deportees in a timely manner. In one particularly egregious case that occurred in September 1941, Head of the Soviet NKVD Transportation Section Volkov informed the NKVD organization of Pavlodar province about the arrival of two train convoys of German deportees only three hours before the freight wagons pulled into their station.³⁵ As a result, local NKVD, Party, and soviet officials did not have nearly enough time to arrange transportation, medical services, and the delivery of food supplies for these deportees.

The documentary record does not clearly indicate why central officials were so dilatory in sending deportation notices to Kazakhstan and other regions of exile. The frenetic pace of the deportations and their disorganized quality suggests that the leaders of the Soviet Communist Party and government were primarily concerned with removing the Soviet Germans from the path of the advancing Wehrmacht and ensuring that they did not collaborate with the Nazis. All other considerations, including ensuring the well-being of the German special-settlers, were secondary to this objective. In the end, the German deportees suffered enormously because of this indifference to their nutritional, housing, and medical needs. According to the estimates of the historians Eric Shmaltz and Samuel Sinner, between 200,000 and 300,000 German exiles

³⁵ "Svodka #16 o khode operatsii po pereseleniiu nemtsev na 20 sentiabria 1941 goda," GARF f. 9497, o. 1, d. 83, l. 130-132. Based on the typical size of deportee train convoys at this time, these convoys probably contained several thousand Germans.

died in the Soviet Union from starvation, disease, exposure, and sheer physical exhaustion during the 1940s.³⁶

As early as the fall of 1941, Soviet NKVD leaders in Moscow were acutely aware that the inhumane living conditions in Kazakhstan's special-settlements were killing the German special-settlers. Instead of acknowledging that the Soviet NKVD had caused these deaths by deporting the Germans to a republic already groaning under the pressures of mass mobilization, the influx of hundreds of thousands of evacuees, and widespread material privation, these central NKVD officials usually blamed local Party and soviet officials for allowing abysmal living conditions among the special-settlers to fester. This was the most extreme manifestation of the phenomenon of bureaucratic scapegoating that became firmly ensconced in the bureaucratic culture of Kazakhstan and the Soviet Union during the war. For example, in November 1941 Head of the Special-Settlement Section of the Soviet NKVD Mikhail Grishunov reported to the co-director of the Special-Settlement Section Ivan Ivanov that 20,790 German special-settlers deported to South-Kazakhstan Province were enduring "particularly poor living conditions."³⁷ According to Grishunov, provincial and district officials concentrated these Germans on a small number of collective farms, leading to overcrowding and the outbreak of contagious diseases. In

³⁶ Eric J. Schmaltz and Samuel D. Sinner, "'You Will Die Under Ruins and Snow': The Soviet Repression of Russian Germans as a Case Study of Successful Genocide," *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 4 (3): (2002), 327-356.

³⁷ "Dokladnaia zapiska o poezdke v komandirovku v Iuzhno-Kazakhstanskuiu obl. KSSR po voprosu pereseleniia nemtsev s 11/IX- po 16/XI-41g," November 17, 1941. GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 84, l. 104-113. Ivanov was born in 1902 in Kursk guberniia. During the 1930s, he held a number of important posts in the Communist party apparatus in Moscow and Riazan Provinces before he became a Soviet NKVD officer in 1939. From 1939 to 1941, he was Director of the Sverdlovsk Province NKVD-NKGB organization. He served as Head of the Special-Settlement Section of the NKVD from 1941 to 1942 in the city of Chkalov. From 1943 to 1944, he headed the Operational-Chekist Section of the NKVD's corrective-labor camps. Fond Aleksandra N. Iakovleva, <http://www.alexanderyakovlev.org/fond/issues-doc/person/1021581>. Last accessed March 6, 2015. Grishunov was born in 1909 in Smolensk guberniia. He became an officer in the Soviet NKVD during the late 1930s, where he quickly rose through the ranks to become head of the Special-Settlement Section from September to November 1941. During the next two decades, he held a variety of important positions in the NKVD-MVD-KGB apparatus. N. B. Petrov (ed.), *Kto rukovodil organami gosbezopasnosti, 1941-1954: spravocnik* (Moscow, 2010), 314-315.

Grishunov's estimation, provincial Party committees and soviet organizations were responsible for the "high death rate" on these collective farms because they had failed to construct enough lodgings to accommodate the arriving special-settlers and they neglected to provide sufficient medical care to the deportees after they arrived.

Grishunov was completely indifferent to the possibility that these local officials lacked the time and resources to care adequately for the Germans exiles. A plethora of other internal NKVD reports also blamed local Party and government officials for allowing the Germans to die of starvation and disease.³⁸ This practice was so ubiquitous that it seemed to be an integral part of the institutional culture of the wartime Soviet NKVD. Officers like Grishunov were probably so intent on blaming these local officials for the high death rate among the German special-settlers because they sought to avoid reprimands from their own superiors inside the Soviet NKVD apparatus. Grishunov and other Soviet NKVD officers described the suffering of these Germans as a local problem that local officials were responsible for remedying, even though the deportation policies of the Soviet NKVD had made this suffering virtually inevitable.

In many cases, local NKVD officers in charge of settling the Germans received so little direction or support from Moscow-based organizations that they had little idea how to fulfill the directives of the Soviet Communist Party and Soviet Sovnarkom. In October 1941, for instance, Senior Soviet Operational Plenipotentiary of Special-Settlements Zubrilov sent a report to Ivanov indicating that approximately 251 German deportees had recently arrived on four collective farms in Qaraghanda province.³⁹ Zubrilov asked Ivanov who would provide food to

³⁸ For example, in a November 1941 report to Merkulov and Chernyshev, Ivanov criticized republican, provincial, and district government organizations in Kazakhstan and Siberia for refusing to allocate bread and livestock to German deportees until they received "special directions from the center". In Ivanov's estimation, this was a tactic to avoid distributing this bread and livestock. Kozlov, *Istoriia stalinskogo Gulaga*, vol. 5, 327.

³⁹ GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 84, l. 63-66. October 31, 1941.

these special-settlers since local collective farmers had not expected so many Germans to arrive and they did not have enough grain in storage. The Soviet Communist Party and Soviet Sovnarkom decree ordering the deportation of the Germans clearly stated that Soviet economic commissariats were responsible for allocating food to the special-settlers.⁴⁰ It seems that at least in this case, these commissariats failed to provide food to the German deportees as ordered. This placed an untenable burden on the shoulders of local collective farmers and made it impossible for local NKVD officers to fulfill central directives related to resettlement. The ambiguous position of the German special-settlers in Soviet society also likely contributed to the unwillingness of central government officials to provide them with food. Because the Soviet Germans were not quite enemies but also not full-fledged Soviet citizens, some central officials likely chose to direct scarce food supplies to more “deserving” groups such as Slavs.

The educational policies of the Kazakh Communist Party and Kazakh government towards the German deportees also reflected their ambiguous social status. In direct contrast to educational practices towards the Kazakhs, the republic’s governing bodies forbade local teachers from educating the Germans in their native language. In December 1941, Ivanov reported to Deputy Soviet NKVD Commissar Vasilii Chernyshev that the Section for People’s Education [*otdel narodnogo obrazovaniia*] of Aqmola province had successfully organized special courses for the children of German special-settlers.⁴¹ According to Ivanov, teachers in

⁴⁰ GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 85, l. 1-6.

⁴¹ “Spetssoobshchenie o khode rasseleniia nemtsev-pereselentsev.” December 2, 1941. GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 83, l. 191-194. Chernyshev was born in Riazan *guberniia* in 1896. During the Civil War, he became a high-ranking Cheka officer in charge of defending the Moscow Railroad. From February 1921 to December 1922, he was commander of Cheka Troops on the Turkestan Front, where he oversaw punitive expeditions and the suppression of anti-Soviet uprisings. During the rest of the 1920s Chernyshev was an OGPU troops commander in the Volga Region, Kazakhstan, and the Far East. He served as Deputy Commissar of the Soviet NKVD and head of the Soviet police from August 1937 until his death in September 1952. He was also head of the Gulag from February 1939 to

this region were conducting classes entirely in Russian. This was no coincidence - educational policies towards German deportees in Aqmola province were part of a systematic effort to deny the special-settlers German-language instruction.⁴² These policies persisted throughout the war.⁴³ The leaders of the Kazakh republic made an effort to educate German children, but they did so in a way that denied their linguistic identity and that violated Soviet policies specifying that Soviet citizens had the right to receive instruction in their native language in addition to Russian.⁴⁴ Soviet authorities in Moscow and Kazakhstan may not have sought to physically annihilate the German population, but their educational policies suggested that they had no interest in preserving the unique linguistic and national particularities of these deportees.

“The Germans Must Be Utilized in a Rational Manner” : The Labor Mobilization of the German Special-Settlers

The interstitial status of the German deportees greatly facilitated the exploitation of their labor by Party and government officials. The leaders of the Soviet Communist Party and Soviet government demanded that the German special-settlers, like all people on the Soviet home front, work intensively to support the war effort. This is hardly surprising. After all, when the

February 1942. Chernyshov was the only major subordinate of Ezhov to survive the latter's arrest in the spring of 1939. K. A. Zalesskii, *Imperiia Stalina: biograficheskii entsiklopedicheskii slovar'* (Moscow, 2000), 481.

⁴² German deportees could not work in any educative capacity whatsoever, which ensured that German children did not receive any instruction in German. Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union*, 96. There is evidence that some German children exiled to Kazakhstan received instruction in Kazakh. According to a November 1941 report to Ivanov from Mikhail Bogdanov, a group of German special-settlers in Zhambyl Province petitioned the local commandant to relocate them from Kazakh collective farms to regions populated by Russians or Ukrainians. According to Bogdanov, these Germans wished for their children to be educated in Russian rather than Kazakh. “Dokladnaia zapiska O rasselenii nemtsev-pereselentsev po Dzhambul'skoi oblasti Kazakhskoi SSR.” November 5, 1941. GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 84, l. 87-93.

⁴³ N. F. Bugai, *L. Beriia – I. Stalinu: “Soglasno Vashemu ukazaniiu--”* (Moscow, 1995), 55.

⁴⁴ For Soviet linguistic policies towards non-Russians during the late 1930s, see Blitstein, “Nation-Building or Russification?”

Germans deportees arrived in Siberia and Kazakhstan during the fall and winter of 1941, the Wehrmacht was penetrating deep into Soviet Union. In order to produce the food and manufactured items that the Red Army needed to repulse the Nazi invaders, the GKO decided to mobilize the Soviet Union's repressed populations for labor, including the special-settlers.⁴⁵ The GKO, however, along with the Soviet Communist Party and Soviet Sovnarkom, did not mobilize the German deportees for labor on the same basis as Russians, Kazakhs, and other non-repressed nationalities. Because Stalin, Beria, and other key Soviet leaders distrusted the German special-settlers and considered them to pose a threat to the Soviet Union because of their supposed sympathy for the Nazis,⁴⁶ these officials exploited the labor of the German exiles more systematically and more far brutally than they did with other Soviet groups.

In August 1941, the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party ordered the NKO to mobilize German special-settlers into special construction battalions.⁴⁷ This was the first step in the creation of one of the most infernal creations of the Stalinist system – the Labor Army. The NKO mobilized over 316,000 Soviet Germans into the Labor Army from 1941 to 1946 and sent them to work in NKVD-controlled labor camps in the Urals, Siberia and Kazakhstan.⁴⁸ Although Labor Army sites were often located close to Gulag corrective-labor camps, mobilized Germans usually lived and worked in strict isolation from Gulag prisoners. The NKO mobilized

⁴⁵ During the war, the NKVD intensified labor mobilization in all institutions under its control, including the Gulag's corrective-labor camps. See Barnes, "All for the Front, All for Victory! The Mobilization of Forced Labor in the Soviet Union during World War Two," *International Labor and Working-Class History*, vol. 58: (Fall 2000), 239-260.

⁴⁶ Polian, *Against their Will*, 127-129.

⁴⁷ Pohl, "Hewers of Wood and Drawers of Water: The Russian-Germans in the Labour Army," *Eurasia Studies Society Journal*, vol. 2 (1): (2013), 1-17.

⁴⁸ Bugai (ed.), *"Mobilizovat' nemtsev v rabochie kolony...I. Stalin": sbornik dokumentov, 1940-e gody* (Moscow, 1998), 11.

members of many nationalities for work in the Labor Army, but Soviet Germans comprised the single largest contingent of labor soldiers by a significant margin.⁴⁹ The Labor Army was, in conception as well as fact, an institution designed to extract labor from the Soviet Union's German population by any means necessary. Living and working conditions in these camps were abysmal, even compared to the hellish Gulag complexes in the Kolyma, Magadan, and Vorkuta regions. As a direct result of the extreme neglect that typified the administration of the Labor Army, at least 50,000 mobilized Germans died of starvation and disease during and immediately after the war.⁵⁰

It is probably not coincidental that the NKO began conscripting Germans into the Labor Army on a mass basis in January 1942 - a very short time after it began conscripting Central Asians into frontline military units.⁵¹ It is entirely possible that the GKO ordered the induction of Germans into the Labor Army, at least in part, to compensate for the redirection of Central Asian workers from labor battalions into Red Army combat units.⁵² By the beginning of 1942, the relative place of Central Asians and Soviet Germans in Soviet society had changed considerably. NKO policies transformed Central Asians into frontline soldiers as well as workers, and at the same time, the NKO and NKVD turned the Germans into a population with no social role other than forced labor. Communist Party and government officials certainly continued to exploit the labor of Kazakhs and other Central Asians after January 1942, but these officials also treated

⁴⁹ The NKO also mobilized Soviet citizens who were Romanians, Hungarians, Finns, Italians, Koreans, Kalmyks, and Crimean Tatars into the Labor Army. Non-Germans, however, constituted no more than a fifth of the total number of labor soldiers. Pohl, "Hewers of Wood and Drawers of Water," 12-13.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 16.

⁵¹ Ibid, 8-9.

⁵² By the end of 1942, the NKO had ejected 33,000 German soldiers from the Red Army – the vast majority of Soviet Germans in uniform at this time. V. A. Berdinskikh, *Spetsposelentsy politicheskaja sssylka narodov Sovetskoi Rossii* (Moscow, 2005), 323-324.

Kazakhs as integral members of the Soviet multinational family who were defending the socialist Motherland with arms in hand. The Labor Army was the most obvious institutional expression of official discrimination against the Soviet Germans, but it is important to keep in mind that the NKO did not mobilize all German special-settlers into this camp network. According to a 1944 Soviet NKVD report, there were 588,542 Germans still living in special-settlements at this time.⁵³ Of these, 298,712 resided in Kazakhstan, making the republic the single largest region of exile for Soviet Germans.⁵⁴ Soviet authorities also mobilized the Germans who remained in the special-settlements for labor, but they employed methods of exploitation that were different from the ones prevalent inside the Labor Army.

The labor mobilization process began even before the German special-settlers arrived in Kazakhstan. The Kazakh Communist Party and Kazakh Sovnarkom directed provincial and district officials to settle deportees in districts containing enterprises that could best take advantage of special-settler labor.⁵⁵ For example, in November 1941 the Soviet NKVD ordered the Central Committee of the Kazakh Communist Party to develop a plan for settling 11,000 German deportees in South-Kazakhstan province's Kirov District. The subsequent report from Grishunov to Ivanov indicated that the Central Committee sent these Germans to Kazakh collective farms involved in cotton cultivation so the deportees could facilitate "the goal of more

⁵³ "Spravka o rasselenii spetspereselentsev-nemtsev." GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 187, l. 192.

⁵⁴ Other regions with particularly high concentrations of German special-settlers in 1944 were Omsk Province (74,650 Germans), Krasnoyarsk krai (67,779 Germans), and Novosibirsk Province (63,440 Germans). Ibid.

⁵⁵ According to Ivanov, approximately 20% of German deportees lived in cities before the NKVD exiled them and the rest resided in rural areas. These proportions, however, often varied tremendously depending on the region of exile. For example, 60% of Germans deported to Krasnoyarsk *krai* were urbanites. "Dokladnaia zapiska nachal'nika Otdela spetsposelenii NKVD SSSR I. V. Ivanova v NKVD SSSR o khode rasseleniia nemtsev-pereselentsev," November 5, 1941. GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 83, l. 177-184. In Kozlov, *Istoriia stalinskogo Gulaga*, vol. 5, 329-331.

rapidly cultivating this fertile steppe.”⁵⁶ Two months later, Senior Operational Plenipotentiary of the Special-Settlement Section of the Soviet NKVD Nikolai Cherepanov sent a report to Ivanov indicating that local officials in Pavlodar Province distributed incoming German deportees according to available living space and the “general labor needs of collective farms, state farms, and MTSs.”⁵⁷ The primary reason for deporting the Soviet Germans was most likely to prevent them from collaborating with advancing Nazi forces, but a strong economic logic informed the resettlement process from the very beginning. The Soviet NKVD clearly intended to use the German special-settlers as a captive labor force to boost economic production in Kazakhstan. How to accomplish this objective on the ground, however, proved to be an immensely complicated question.

In 1941 and 1942 senior NKVD and Kazakh Communist Party officials only issued general directives to local Party and government officials concerning the labor mobilization of the deportees. These apparatchiki consistently enjoined local officials to put the Germans to “rational economic use,” but they never specified how to accomplish this task or what this term meant in practice. Because there was no comprehensive strategy or centralized program for putting the Germans to work, Party and government organizations in Moscow and Kazakhstan frequently disagreed about how best to exploit the labor of these special-settlers. These disagreements became especially acute when highly skilled Germans were involved. Before the NKVD deported the Soviet Germans, they were perhaps the most highly educated nationality in the Soviet Union.⁵⁸ For this reason, arriving convoys of German special-settlers contained large

⁵⁶ GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 84, l. 104-113.

⁵⁷ GARF 9479, o. 1, d. 85, l. 188-194. January 24, 1942. As of November 1941, the NKVD had deported 7,511 Germans to Pavlodar Province.

⁵⁸ Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union*, 94.

numbers of technical specialists, agricultural experts, doctors, and other professionals who Soviet NKVD and Kazakh Communist Party officials considered particularly beneficial to the republic's economy.⁵⁹

Even before the Nazi invasion in June 1941, Beria ordered NKVD organs throughout the Soviet Union to identify “kulak” and Polish special-settlers with valuable occupational skills and educational backgrounds to employ them “according to their specialties” in enterprises located outside provincial and republican centers.⁶⁰ When it came to the German deportees, however, local NKVD and government officials had a great deal of difficulty implementing this directive. To cite one particularly revealing case, in the fall of 1941 the Special-Settlement Section of the Soviet NKVD sent Senior Plenipotentiary Kurtashov to investigate the resettlement of Soviet Germans to Kzyl-Orda province. Kurtashov's subsequent report to Deputy Head of the Special-Settlement Section Mikhail Konradov stated that it would be difficult for local soviet officials in rural districts to properly “utilize” arriving Germans who were engineers, electricians, doctors, and teachers because there were not enough enterprises and hospitals in these regions large enough to absorb these professionals.⁶¹ According to Kurtashov, the main problem was that local Party and government officials had settled these special-settlers in a completely illogical and haphazard manner. He claimed, for example, that local authorities had sent nine German tractor

⁵⁹ During the 1930s, Soviet economic planners struggled to attract industrial and other kinds of specialists to isolated regions like the Urals and Kazakhstan because of low living standards in these areas. See Harris, *The Great Urals*, 141-142. This, combined with the relative novelty of sophisticated technical training in Kazakhstan, helps explain why there were so few Kazakh and Slavic specialists in the republic during the Great Patriotic War and why the German specialists were so valuable. For the difficulties experienced by the managers of economic enterprises in Kazakhstan and other “undeveloped” regions in retaining trained specialists during the 1930s and 1940s, see Siegelbaum, *Broad is My Native Land*, 180-181.

⁶⁰ See for example a directive from Beria to all republican and provincial NKVD directors about the proper method for putting deportees to work. GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 67, l. 1-2. January 1941.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, d. 84, l. 56-59. October 21, 1941.

drivers to the Thälmann (*Tel'man*) Collective Farm but neglected to send any tractor drivers to other farms in the immediate vicinity. Kurtashov predicted that the directors of the Thälmann Collective Farm would be forced to employ these tractor drivers as unskilled farmhands because there were only a few tractors available, even though these drivers would have provided an enormous economic boost to nearby farms, many of which were in urgent need of tractor drivers.⁶²

The apparent failure of these Kzyl-Orda officials to employ these Germans in a rational manner was symptomatic of a much wider problem. NKVD officials in Moscow constantly complained that Kazakhstan's local government officials were ignoring directives to employ German special-settlers according to their occupational specialties. Grishunov highlighted a particularly egregious example of this phenomenon in a report written to Ivanov in November 1941.⁶³ According to Grishunov, an unspecified number of collective farm chairpersons in South-Kazakhstan province were forcing elderly German academics to work as pickers on cotton fields.⁶⁴ Unsurprisingly, these senior citizens were picking cotton at a lower rate than local farmers, most of whom were probably middle-aged or younger. Grishunov also complained that German tractor drivers, lathe operators, and other specialists were doing basic farm work that did not correspond to their occupational expertise, despite the fact that these professionals could have greatly increased the productivity of local state farms and MTSs. Grishunov noted with alarm that many German professionals had become so discontented with their employment

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ "Dokladnaia zapiska o poezdke v komandirovku v Iuzhno-Kazakhstanskuiu obl. KSSR po voprosu pereseleniia nemtsev s 11/IX – po 16/XI-41 g." GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 84, l. 104-113.

⁶⁴ The NKVD had deported 7,511 Germans to South-Kazakhstan province by November 1941. Ibid.

situation that they were illegally migrating to Tashkent and Shymkent to find work to which they were more accustomed.

Soviet NKVD officers also frequently complained that local soviet officials were too quick to force urban Germans with no agricultural experience to work on collective farms instead of assigning them to office work in district centers. According to a November 1941 report from Ivanov to NKGB head Vsevolod Merkulov and Chernyshev, this practice was leading to overall “disorganization as well as production breakdowns [*razlozhenie*]” on local collective farms. The situation had gotten so bad that some German deportees were refusing outright to go to work.⁶⁵ In Ivanov’s estimation, the “correct labor utilization” of these German urbanites [*nemtsy-pereselentsy gorodskogo kontingenta*] was “one of the most important questions of the present day [moment]” because they could potentially do a great deal to increase economic productivity in Kazakhstan and Siberia.⁶⁶

From a purely economic perspective, Grishunov and Ivanov were right to criticize local officials for putting these deportees to work in such an arbitrary manner. Several reports written by local Kazakh NKVD officers indicate that German special-settlers could offer a significant and even life-saving economic boon to local collective and state farms under the right circumstances. For example, in October 1941 Head of the NKVD organization of Qostanai province Zabedev reported to Kazakh NKVD head Bogdanov that collective and state farmers in the province “warmly welcomed” over 15,400 German deportees who arrived in the previous month.⁶⁷ This kind of welcoming attitude was rare in Siberia and Kazakhstan during the fall of

⁶⁵ Kozlov, *Istoriia stalinskogo Gulaga*, vol. 5, 326-327.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 327.

⁶⁷ “Dokladnaia zapiska “O rasselenii nemtsev-pereselentsev, pribyvshikh iz ASSR Nemtsev Povolzh’ia i Saratovskoi oblasti,” GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 85, l. 167-172. October 30, 1941. For another Kazakh NKVD report

1941, since local farmers often saw German deportees as “fascists” who drained local food supplies. Local farmers quite often reacted to the arrival of German special-settlers with hostility rather than with open arms.⁶⁸ In Zabedev’s estimation, the collective and state farmers of Qostanai province accepted these German deportees so readily because they arrived in the middle of the harvesting campaign and local farms were shorthanded because the NKVD had conscripted so many locals. For this reason, Zabedev claimed, these farmers were “fully prepared” for the arrival of the Germans, and the special-settlers quickly picked up farm implements and began working the fields.

The language that Zabedev employed in his report is telling. Rather than characterizing these German special-settlers as enemies of Soviet power, he portrayed them as saviors of the annual harvesting campaign in Qostanai province.⁶⁹ The fact that Zabedev described these Germans as economically useful, however, does not mean that he had an altogether positive view of them. Like Grishunov, Kurtashov, and other Soviet NKVD officers, Zabedev’s primary objective was to ensure that local farm managers put the Germans to work in a way that yielded maximum economic benefits. Concerns related to the welfare and rehabilitation of the German special-settlers were mostly absent from these NKVD communications.

Kazakh NKVD officers like Zabedev usually portrayed the labor mobilization of the German special-settlers as a seamless and altogether successful process, most likely because they had an obvious professional interest in making it appear as though they were resettling the

about German deportees immediately going to work on collective and state farms throughout Kazakhstan, see GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 84, l. 75-84. November 4, 1941.

⁶⁸ Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union*, 107.

⁶⁹ For a similar assessment by Ivan Ivanov of the labor efforts of German special-settlers in a number of regions of exile, see Kozlov, *Istoriia Stalinskogo Gulaga*, vol. 5, 326.

deportees in an efficient manner. Soviet NKVD officers, in contrast, were much more likely to criticize their subordinates in Kazakhstan for not establish conditions conducive to productive labor. In November 1941, for instance, Ivanov sent a letter of reprimand to Zabedev and Kazakh NKVD head Aleksei Babkin in which he strongly refuted Zabedev's October 1941 report.⁷⁰ According to Ivanov, a Soviet NKVD inspection in Qostanai province indicated that the majority of German deportees were "working poorly" on collective and state farms. Ivanov claimed, for example, that on the East [*Vostok*] Collective Farm, only 22 out of 49 "labor-capable" German exiles were working, and in two weeks they earned wages for only nine workdays. According to him, German women were particularly "work shy" because they had no shoes and were suffering from unspecified illnesses. It is difficult if not impossible to ascertain the veracity of this investigatory report, but it is obvious that Ivanov sought to contradict Zabedev's positive assessment of labor conditions in Qostanai province in very strong terms.

What did Ivanov have to gain by portraying these Germans as poor workers? Most likely, he was employing the practice of scapegoating that Soviet NKVD officers used so often to deflect blame for the manifold problems afflicting the special-settlements. According to Ivanov's report, the Kazakh NKVD was completely neglecting the living and working conditions of the German special-settlers of Qostanai Province and as a result, this responsibility had "fallen almost completely on the shoulders of collective farm chairpersons, which is a situation they cannot cope with."⁷¹ Ivanov went on to claim that government soviets and local Party

⁷⁰ GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 84, l. 103-104. November 15, 1941. Babkin was born in the city of Ekaterinodar in 1906. During the 1920s, he worked as a district Komsomol director in Krasnodar *krai*. In the late 1930s, he served as a regional secretary of the Taganrog City Party Committee and as a director in the Rostov Provincial Party Committee. He joined the Soviet NKVD in 1938 and worked as head of the Kazakh NKVD from 1940 to 1941 and again from 1941 to 1943. From 1944 to 1945, Babkin served as head of the Chelyabinsk provincial NKVD organization. Ashimbaev, *Kto est' kto v Kazakhstane*, 155.

⁷¹ GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 84, l. 103-104.

organizations were also failing to provide material assistance to these chairpersons, and as a result, there was not enough food to distribute to the special-settlers. Tellingly, Ivanov pointed out that these “shortcomings” [*nedostatki*] were not unique to Kazakhstan – they were common in special-settlements throughout the Soviet Union. Another November 1941 report from Ivanov to Chernyshev indicated, for example, that local NKVD, soviet, and agricultural officials in Kazakhstan, Novosibirsk province, and Omsk province were utterly failing to put deported Germans to work.⁷² As a result, many of these special-settlers were “loafing about” [*bezdel'nichaut*], i.e. they were wandering around city centers in search of employment.⁷³

Ivanov's reports assigned copious blame to local Party and government officials for their alleged failure to exploit the labor of these Germans, but surprisingly, he did not blame the special-settlers themselves for failing to contribute to the local economy. This was not anomalous – on the contrary, the records of the Special-Settlement Section of the Soviet NKVD contain a slew of internal reports produced from late 1941 to early 1942 that portrayed the labor efforts of the German deportees in glowing terms. One typical November 1941 report from Nikolai Cherepanov to Ivanov, for example, insisted that most German deportees in Semei Province, minus a small number of special-settlers with “a poor attitude towards work,” were working on collective farms with the same dedication as local Slavic and Kazakh farmers.⁷⁴ Two

⁷² “Spetssoobshchenie o khode rasseleniia nemtsev-pereselentsev,” November 12, 1941. GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 83, l. 188-190.

⁷³ Ivanov's characterization of these Germans was similar to the way NKVD officers described people who moved about in search of work after the establishment of the passport and residence registration system in 1933. During the remainder of the 1930s and into the 1940s, NKVD officers commonly described people without a definite place of residence as a threat to social order and state security. See Shearer, *Policing Stalin's Socialism*, 243-284.

⁷⁴ “Dokladnaia zapiska O rezul'tatakh rasseleniia i trudoustroistva nemtsev-pereselentsev v Semipalatinskuii obl. Kazakhskoi SSR.” November 17, 1941. GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 84, l. 123-125. According to this report, there were 41,194 German special-settlers in Semei Province as of December 1941.

months later, Cherepanov reported to Ivanov that German special-settlers in 12 districts of Pavlodar province had logged an exceptional numbers of workdays during the recent harvesting campaign. Some of these German deportees had received payment for over 100 workdays, which was substantially above the average output of most locals.⁷⁵

These Soviet NKVD reports strongly implied that the German special-settlers were quite willing to work – the problem was that the “irrational” labor mobilization strategies of local officials were preventing them from doing so. Why were Soviet NKVD officials like Ivanov and Cherepanov so quick to blame these local officials instead of the German deportees for problems related to labor mobilization in the special-settlements? After all, according to the Soviet Communist Party and government, the Soviet Germans were treasonous. It thus would have made sense for these NKVD officers to depict these deportees as unwilling to work for the benefit of Soviet power. The contradictory nature of the special-settlement regime was probably the key factor that prompted Cherepanov and Ivanov to utilize this particular scapegoating strategy. The Soviet NKVD intended for the special-settlements to serve two goals that were not fully compatible: facilitating the labor exploitation of the deportees on the one hand, and keeping them isolated from Soviet society on the other. The documentary record strongly suggests that many local government officials in Kazakhstan were more concerned with the latter objective than with the former, as evidenced by their refusal to employ German deportees on collective farms and in other enterprises. Rather than attempting to reconcile the contradictory objectives of the special-settlement regime, Soviet NKVD officers chose to pursue a far easier strategy -

⁷⁵ “Dokladnaia zapiska O rezul'tatakh rasseleniia i trudoustroistva nemtsev-pereselentsev v Pavlodarskoi obl. Kazakhskoi SSR,” January 24, 1942. GARF 9479, o. 1, d. 85, l. 188-194. This report indicated that there were 51,357 German special-settlers in Pavlodar Province in January 1942.

blaming local officials for failing to maintain a balance between the imperatives of exploitation and isolation.

In any case, efforts to mobilize the German deportees for labor continued well into 1942. As the war dragged on, the labor mobilization campaign inside the special-settlements assumed the qualities of an institutional conflict involving several Party and government organizations. This conflict was rooted primarily in the tendency of local Party officials to mobilize Germans into the Labor Army in a way that threatened the viability of local economic enterprises. One particularly indicative case involved German special-settlers working in the fishing industry of Kzyl-Orda Province. In May 1942, Head of the Military Section of the Kazakh Communist Party Petr Alekseev reprimanded Head of the Military section of the Kzyl-Orda Provincial Party Committee Erniiazov and Secretary of the Aral District Party Committee Ishkenov for improperly mobilizing German special-settlers working for the Soviet Commissariat of the Fishing Industry.⁷⁶ According to Alekseev, the Kazakh Communist Party and Kazakh Sovnarkom had ordered these provincial and district Party committees to send a very small number of special-settler adults and children to work in the Labor Army. Erniiazov and Ishkenov, however, had mobilized special-settlers in numbers that far exceeded the directives of republican leaders.⁷⁷ To make matters worse, many of the mobilized deportees were “qualified” professionals, although Alekseev did not specify what kind of qualifications they had. In response to this “illicit” mobilization, Commissariat of Fishing officials in Aral district had complained to their superiors in Moscow that Erniiazov and Ishkenov were “weakening production” in local fishing enterprises by taking so many qualified workers. Alekseev’s

⁷⁶ APRK f. 708, o. 6, d. 2500, l. 33. May 5, 1942.

⁷⁷ Alekseev did not specify exactly how many special-settlers were involved.

subsequent directive to Erniiazov and Ishkenov reminded the two officials that they could only mobilize special-settler specialists into the Labor Army if unskilled deportees were unavailable.⁷⁸

It is clear that Alekseev was attempting to balance the manpower needs of the Labor Army with those of local economic enterprises. The fact that Commissariat of Fishing officials lodged this complaint to Alekseev in the first place suggests that these Germans special-settlers had become integral to the functioning of the fishing enterprises of Aral district, perhaps because these Germans were qualified to use fishing equipment that few other workers could. By the fall of 1942, local Party leaders in Kazakhstan had become the most strident “protectors” of deported Germans when government organizations attempted to mobilize them and send them to other regions. In October 1942, for instance, Secretary of the Semei Provincial Party Committee Bogolubov sent a telegram to Skvortsov complaining that a recent GKO order to mobilize German adults into the Labor Army would leave German collective farms without any young and productive workhands.⁷⁹ Bogolubov did not challenge the legitimacy of the GKO order directly, but he ominously warned that if the NKO mobilized these Germans into the Labor Army, the redeployment of large numbers of urban residents and evacuees would be necessary to maintain agricultural production on these farms. According to Bogolubov, these German farmers were vital to the smooth functioning of the province’s agricultural economy, and the manpower needs of the regional economy should have superseded those of the Labor Army.

This archival *delo* does not indicate whether Skvortsov successfully intervened on Bogolubov’s behalf, and it is unclear how often cases like this were resolved in favor of local officials. Nevertheless, the case of the Aral fishing enterprises sheds light on the place of the

⁷⁸ APRK f. 708, o. 6, d. 2500, l. 33.

⁷⁹ APRK f. 708, o. 6/1, d. 1168, l. 56. October 2, 1942.

German deportees in Kazakhstan's society. Like many other Party and government officials in the republic's provinces during late 1941 and early 1942, Bogolubov characterized the German special-settlers as valuable workers who were contributing to local economic development. There is no evidence however, that Bogolubov saw the Germans as anything more than forced laborers. By extension, there is little evidence in the archival record that anyone inside the Soviet Union's Party and government apparatuses in either Moscow or Almaty seriously considered accompanying the labor mobilization of the special-settlers with a restoration of their rights as Soviet citizens. As the war continued, the role of the Germans in Kazakhstan's society became centered more and more on labor until this became the dominant *raison d'être* for the maintenance of the special-settlement system.

“Extra Mouths to Feed”: The North Caucasian Special-Settlers in Kazakhstan, 1943-1945

In the winter of 1943, Wehrmacht Army Group A withdrew from the Rostov region under intense pressure from the Red Army, leaving the Caucasus vulnerable to a Soviet offensive.⁸⁰ By November 1944, the Red Army had liberated the entire North Caucasus, including several non-Russian regions such as the Karachay Autonomous Province, the Kabardian-Balkar ASSR, and the Chechen-Ingush ASSR.⁸¹ Peace did not ensue in these regions after the expulsion of the Nazis, however. In the Chechen-Ingush ASSR, insurgents continued the brutal fight for independence they launched in late 1939.⁸² According to NKVD estimates, as

⁸⁰ Glantz, *When Titans Clashed*, 141-142.

⁸¹ The Balkars and Karachays are Turkic, historically Muslim nationalities who were conquered by the Russian Empire in the 19th century. Soviet authorities established the Balkar and Karachay national territories during the early 1920s.

⁸² The major leader of the anti-Soviet insurgency in the Chechen-Ingush ASSR was Israil Khant Kh'asan. By the summer of 1941, Israil commanded as many as 5,000 guerrillas and a year later, he was receiving support from the

many as 980 armed rebels fought in the North Caucasus against Soviet authorities from June 1941 to November 1943.⁸³ Anti-Soviet resistance was far less intense in the Karachay and Balkar territories during the Soviet reoccupation,⁸⁴ but the fate of the Karachays and Balkars mirrored that of the Chechens and Ingush – deportation to distant Kazakhstan.

The Karachays were the first Caucasian nationality targeted by the Soviet government for deportation. In October 1943, the Supreme Soviet issued a decree ordering the relocation of the Karachays to punish them for “traitorously assisting the Germans during the war” and defying the “policies [*meropriatiia*] of Soviet power” during the reoccupation of the North Caucasus.⁸⁵ In March 1944, the Supreme Soviet issued a similar decree ordering the deportation of the Chechen and Ingush populations for committing a litany of anti-Soviet crimes, which included collaboration with the Nazis, refusal to engage in “honest labor,” and conducting “bandit raids” against neighboring provinces after the Soviet reoccupation.⁸⁶ One month later, the Supreme Soviet issued a deportation order for the Balkars. The stated reason for this relocation, once again, was that this group had “betrayed the motherland” by assisting the Nazis.⁸⁷ Like the

Abwehr. Following the assassination of Israil in December 1944, Sheikh Qureish Belhorev led the anti-Soviet insurgency until the NKVD finally suppressed it during the mid-1950s. Jeffrey Burds, “The Soviet War against ‘Fifth Columnists’: The Case of Chechnya, 1942-4,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 42 (2): 2007, 267-314; Statiev, “The Nature of Anti-Soviet Armed Resistance, 1942-44.”

⁸³ Ibid, 307.

⁸⁴ Many memoirs written by former Balkar and Karachay deportees stress that local villagers welcomed Soviet troops who entered these territories in 1944 with open arms. See especially Mariia Abramovna Kotliarova and Viktor Nikolaevich Kotliarov (eds.), *Balkariia deportatsiia: svidetel'stvo ochevidtsey* (Nalchik, 2004) vol. 1-2.

⁸⁵ “Ukaz prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR O likvidatsii Karachaevskoi avtonomnoi oblasti i ob administrativnom ustroistve ee territorii,” October 12, 1943. In Alieva, *Take eto bylo*, vol. 1, 258-259.

⁸⁶ “Ukaz Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR O likvidatsii Checheno-Ingushkoi ASSR i ob administrativnom ustroistve ee territorii,” March 7, 1944. In Alieva, *Tak eto bylo*, vol. 2, 87.

⁸⁷ “Ukaz prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR O pereselenii balkartsev, prozhivaiushchikh v Kabardino-Balkarskoi ASSR, i o pereimenovanii Kabardino-Balkarskoi ASSR v Kabardinskuiu ASSR,” April 8, 1944. In Alieva, *Tak eto bylo*, vol. 2, 266.

Soviet Germans, the NKVD forced these nationalities into special-settlements where they lived and worked until the end of the war and beyond.

Kazakhstan's Party and government officials struggled to accommodate the North Caucasian special-settlers after they arrived in exile. The previous section argued that the Soviet NKVD scapegoated local officials to deflect blame for allowing deplorable living and working conditions among the German deportees to persist. A similar institutional dynamic emerged vis-à-vis the North Caucasian special-settlers. By 1944, these scapegoating practices had become so entrenched within the administrative apparatuses governing the North Caucasian special-settlers that central and local officials spent more time trying to avoid responsibility for these deportees than actually providing for their everyday needs. Soviet NKVD officers tended to blame the Kazakh Communist Party and Kazakh Sovnarkom for neglecting the needs of the North Caucasians. The leaders of the Kazakh Communist Party and Kazakh Sovnarkom, in turn, accused provincial Party and government organs of the same crime, and provincial officials blamed the heads of collective farms and other enterprises for squandering supplies intended for the deportees. Thanks to this pyramidal scapegoating dynamic, the North Caucasian deportees were left without institutional patrons or protectors in Moscow and Kazakhstan during the war.

Party-state officials had more time to prepare for the arrival of the North Caucasian special-settlers in 1943-1944 compared to the Germans in 1941, but these authorities still complained that they lacked the resources to supply the incoming North Caucasians with everyday necessities. For example, in February 1943 the Sovnarkoms and Communist Parties of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan sent a joint telegram to Chernyshev requesting that he convince the Soviet Sovnarkom to send food, clothing fabric, and shoes to their republics post haste so they

could supply incoming Karachay deportees.⁸⁸ According to this telegram, the supply situation in regions of exile had already become rather desperate, and only regular deliveries of supplies would ensure that the Karachays had the “absolute minimum amounts” of food and clothing needed to survive.⁸⁹ Chernyshev forwarded this request to GKO member Georgii Malenkov and confirmed that these extra supplies were needed because the “[special]-settlers have no other sources of food and their supply situation is woefully insufficient.”⁹⁰

In June 1944, Skvortsov and Ondasynov responded to reports from Kazakhstan’s provinces about poor living conditions among the North Caucasians by ordering provincial Party committees and the chairpersons of provincial soviets to rectify the situation and “treat the special-settlers in the same way as [local] collective farmers, state farmers, and industrial enterprise workers in every respect.”⁹¹ Skvortsov and Ondasynov likely issued this directive at least in part to shift blame downward for the high death rate inside the special-settlements.⁹² In any case, their directive did not seem to have a palpable effect because the supply situation among the North Caucasian deportees steadily deteriorated during the new few months. To provide just one indication of the extent of this humanitarian disaster, in July 1944 the NKVD

⁸⁸ GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 153, l. 21. February 11, 1943.

⁸⁹ The Kazakh and Kyrgyz Communist Parties and Sovnarkoms requested 645 tons of flour, 161 tons of grain, 900 tons of seed grain, 1,300,000 meters of cotton fabric, and 14,000 pairs of shoes a month. According to them, these supplies would allow them to supply every Karachay special-settler with 100 grams of flour, 25 grams of grain, and 15 grams of salt per day.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 183, l. 264-266. In February 1944, Nasedkin issued an updated set of regulations reiterating that special-settlers were entitled to the same civil rights as other Soviet citizens with “some limitations”, i.e. the right to leave their district or city of exile. “Prikaz NKVD SSSR #00127 o vvedenii v deistvie polozheniia o raionnykh i poselkovykh spetskomendaturakh NKVD,” February 7, 1944. GARF f. 9401, o. 12, d. 207, t. 2, l. 2-2 ob in Kozlov, *Istoriia stalinskogo Gulaga*, vol. 5, 400-403.

⁹² The Russian historian Viktor Zemskov estimates that during the first year of deportation almost 45,000 North Caucasians died. According to him the total number of deaths among the North Caucasians from 1945 to 1950 was over 100,000. Zemskov, *Spetsposelelentsy v SSSR*, 194.

organization of Pavlodar province reported to Bogdanov and Deputy Head of the Soviet NKVD Sergei Kruglov that 1,821 out of 41,780 Balkar, Chechen, and Ingush special-settlers had died during the first six months of 1944, mostly from starvation [*istoshchenie*].⁹³ Soviet and Kazakh NKVD leaders received dozens of reports from local NKVD organs during the summer and fall of 1944 indicating that thousands of North Caucasians were dying throughout Kazakhstan.⁹⁴

The Kazakh Communist Party and Kazakh Sovnarkom frequently instructed local Party and soviet officials to provide the North Caucasian deportees with emergency food aid and other kinds of assistance, but the leaders of the republic also frequently criticized these officials for failing to do so. These criticisms became increasingly insistent and sharp during the final months of the war. For instance, a March 1945 meeting organized by the Kazakh Sovnarkom to discuss the “economic organization” [*khozustroistvo*] of the North Caucasian special-settlers identified the “incorrect attitude” of local soviet and Party officials as the primary cause of unemployment and mass starvation among the deportees.⁹⁵ The committee noted that even though the Kazakh Sovnarkom had instructed enterprise directors to provide food to North Caucasians on par with non-deported workers, enterprise employees working in cafeterias and food stores often refused to give special-settlers normal rations. In some cases, enterprise directors refused outright to give any food to deportees, leading to the onset of starvation. The Kazakh Sovnarkom committee accused the directors of a cement factory in South-Kazakhstan Province of seizing the bread cards of sick North Caucasian deportees, claiming that these

⁹³ “Dokladnaia zapiska Ob itogakh raboty UNKVD Pavlodarskoi oblasti po spetspereslentsam s Severnogo Kavkaza za pervoe polugodie 1944 goda.” GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 168, l. 29-42.

⁹⁴ See for example “Spravka o sostoianii trudovogo i khoziaistvennogo ustroistva spetspereslentsev v raionakh Taldy-Kurganskoi i Iuzhno-Kazakhstanskoi oblastei,” October 9, 1944, APRK f. 708, o. 8, d. 1322, l. 1-6.

⁹⁵ “Rezolutsiia 1-go respublikanskogo soveshchaniia nachal’nikov oblastnykh otdelov po khozustruistvu spetsperelentsev,” March 16-20, 1945. APRK f. 708, o. 9, d. 314, l. 16-23.

special-settlers did not have the right to receive rations because they could not work. Not stopping there, these directors were allegedly ejecting infirm deportees from their barracks under the pretense that only productive workers were entitled to housing.⁹⁶

According to several Kazakh Sovnarkom committee members, the kinds of abuses that enterprise officials in this cement factory had perpetrated were endemic throughout Kazakhstan. In his address to the conference, Deputy Chairman of the Kazakh Sovnarkom Presidium Aleksandr Zagovel'ev reported that provincial soviets in East-Kazakhstan province were distributing food intended for the deportees to economic organizations and institutions with no special-settler employees.⁹⁷ Because of this illegal practice, "large numbers" of deportees were starving. Zagovel'ev also accused soviet officials in Öskemen of failing to report the embezzlement of state goods earmarked for North Caucasian exiles to the Kazakh Sovnarkom, and the latter became aware of this criminal conspiracy only after launching an independent investigation on its own initiative. Zagovel'ev concluded his report by warning that district and enterprise officials in East-Kazakhstan province were emulating the corrupt practice of their superiors in Öskemen by confiscating food supplies designated for the special-settlers, leading to more hunger among the deportees.

The main takeaway from Zagovel'ev's report was that the Kazakh government was making a good faith effort to feed the North Caucasian deportees, but corrupt local officials were disrupting these efforts for their own benefit. Zagovel'ev and the other participants in this Kazakh Sovnarkom conference certainly had a strong stake in heaping blame on their local subordinates to avoid censure from Moscow for the deteriorating condition of the North

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

Caucasian special-settlers. It must be kept in mind, however, that food, clothing, and other basic supplies were in extremely short supply in Kazakhstan in 1945, and it is quite feasible that local Party and government officials were indeed reluctant to allocate valuable resources to the North Caucasians. These special-settlers, after all, did not exactly constitute an “enemy” group, but they were clearly different from local Slavs and Kazakhs. By refusing to clearly define the status of the deportees, the leaders of the Soviet Communist Party and government created a social and institutional space where discrimination could and did flourish.

Official policies towards frontline veterans who were members of repressed North Caucasian nationalities spoke to the ambiguous status of these deportees. In July 1942, the GKO blocked the induction of Chechens, Ingush, Kabardians, Balkars, and all “indigenous” peoples of Dagestan into the Red Army.⁹⁸ Members of officially non-repressed groups like the Kabardians who were already in combat units remained on the frontlines, but the NKO demobilized all Balkar, Chechen, Ingush, and Karachay soldiers and ordered them to join their families in exile after the completion of the North Caucasian deportation operations in 1943-1944.⁹⁹ In 1942 and 1943, the NKO issued several directives prohibiting all Caucasians and Central Asians from serving in frontline units, thereby demonstrating a strong degree of distrust towards these non-Slavic national groups (see pages 44-52). The Balkars, Chechens, Ingush, and Karachay,

⁹⁸ Sinitsyn, *Za russkii narod!* 88.

⁹⁹ Bugai writes that the NKO ejected 5,943 officers, 20,209 sergeants, and 130,691 rank-and-file-soldiers who were Chechen or Ingush from the Red Army. N. F. Bugai, “Pravda o deportatsii chechenskogo i ingushskogo narodov,” in Alieva, *Tak eto bylo*, vol. 2, 80-86. For a memorandum from the Soviet NKO and Military Commissariat of the Kazakh SSR clarifying that special-settlers were not subject to military induction, see APRK f. 708, o. 7/1, d. 939, l. 82. In many cases, demobilization was a very slow process. The Red Army did not demobilize members of some repressed nationalities until 1946. See the case of the Crimean Tatar soldier Yakub Faizullaev. “Faizullaev Yakub Akhmetovich,” *Ia pomniu*. http://iremember.ru/memoirs/pekhotintsi/fayzullaev-yakub-akhmetovich/?sphrase_id=14209. Accessed April 3, 2015.

however, occupied an even lower position in the Soviet Union's national hierarchy because the GKO and NKVD followed their demobilization with deportation.

Special-settlers could not legally serve in the military, but veterans deported from the frontlines, as well as their families, were still entitled to the same rations, pensions, and other benefits that Slavic and Kazakh military families were supposed to receive. In June 1944, Nikolai Bogdanov sent a typical directive to the Qaraghanda provincial NKVD organization ordering it to "take into account" special-settler families who had members serving in the Red Army.¹⁰⁰ Bogdanov reminded this NKVD organization that local soviets were required to provide these families with extra rations and a pension. Deported military families were simultaneously repressed and privileged, and it was not clear whether their status as veterans superseded their status as members of stigmatized nationalities, or vice versa.

Bogdanov likely sent this directive because these Qaraghanda Kazakh NKVD officers were confused about the contradictory status of North Caucasian veterans and their families. They would not have been the only confused officers within the Kazakh NKVD apparatus. In January 1944, Head of the Special-Settlement Section of the Kazakh NKVD Maksim Subbotin forwarded a letter of inquiry to Head of the Special-Settlement Section of the Soviet NKVD Ostapov indicating that many Karachay exiles were submitting petitions to the Kazakh NKVD and Kazakh Communist Party asking to leave the special-settlements.¹⁰¹ Many of these Karachay special-settlers were war invalids who were receiving government stipends, decorated partisans who fought against the Nazi occupiers in the North Caucasus, and even members of special NKVD groups sent to destroy Wehrmacht stragglers after the Nazis withdrew from the region in

¹⁰⁰ June 29, 1944. GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 167, l. 260-262.

¹⁰¹ January 19, 1944. GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 137, l. 197.

November 1943. According to Subbotin's letter, the Kazakh NKVD and Kazakh Communist Party had refused these petitions, but Subbotin did not know the proper procedure for dealing with these deported veterans and requested clarification from Ostapov.

Confusion regarding deported military families continued to reign during the fall of 1944, and the ambiguous status of North Caucasian military families prompted even high-ranking Soviet NKVD officers to express doubts as to whether these deportees belonged in the special-settlements. In October, Chernyshev and the new Head of the Special-Settlement Section of the Soviet NKVD Mikhail Kuznetsov send a telegram to Beria recommending that the immediate family members of Karachay, Balkar, Chechen, Ingush, and other deported Red Army soldiers be allowed to petition for release from the special-settlements so they could return to their former homes in the North Caucasus.¹⁰² Chernyshev and Kuznetsov apparently believed that the deported family members of military service members should not be subject to the special-settler regime at all. This belief, however, directly contradicted the deportation decrees of the Supreme Soviet, which clearly stated that all members of repressed nationalities were subject to exile, even the most devoted defenders of the Soviet Union. Special-settler veterans were entitled to extra government support, but these benefits did not change the fact that they were also subject to a brutal regime of confinement that discriminated against them because of their nationality.

¹⁰² GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 157, l. 48. October 31, 1944. Chernyshev and Kuznetsov were specifically referring to the wives, children, parents, and non-adult brothers and sisters of these Red Army soldiers. There is no response from Beria in this *delo*, but there is no indication whatsoever that any North Caucasians were released from the special-regime until 1956. Kuznetsov was born in Vladimir *guberniia* in 1909. During the 1920s and early 1930s, he worked in a variety of managerial positions in the Moscow Komsomol and Party organizations. He began working for the Soviet NKVD in 1936 and became head of the Special-Settlement Section in March 1944. He worked in this position until October 1946, and then became head of the MVD's Prison Section until he was discredited and fired in 1955. Petrov, *Kto rukovodil organami gosbezopasnosti*, 519.

These discriminatory policies, however, did not lead to the total exclusion of the North Caucasian deportees from Party and government institutions while in exile. Unlike German deportees, many North Caucasian special-settlers continued to work for the Communist Party and government apparatuses after they arrived in exile. The Kazakh NKVD kept detailed lists of former Party and government officials exiled from the North Caucasus,¹⁰³ and Party and government organs in Kazakhstan used these lists to identify and employ North Caucasian special-settlers with administrative backgrounds.¹⁰⁴ The integration of these apparatchiks into local government organs began immediately after they arrived in exile. A month before the Supreme Soviet ordered the deportation of the Karachays, Kruglov and Chernyshev estimated in a plan approved by Beria that half the commandant staffs that administered the exile networks in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan would consist of NKVD officers from the Karachay Autonomous Province, and the other half would consist of local NKVD officials.¹⁰⁵ This became a typical practice for staffing the commandant offices. In April 1944, for instance, Skvortsov and Bogdanov reported to Beria that they had ordered provincial Party committees in Almaty province to train Chechen and Ingush officials to work as administrators in soviet and agricultural organizations in districts populated by their fellow deportees.¹⁰⁶ According to

¹⁰³ See for example GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 183, l. 258-260.

¹⁰⁴ In some cases, the NKVD deported members of repressed North Caucasian nationalities who worked in the Party-state apparatus separately from other special-settlers. For example, in April 1944 Head of the Kyrgyz NKVD Pchelkin reported that 35 families consisting of “former directors and authorities of the Chechen-Ingush ASSR” arrived in Frunze separately from the other 20,596 Chechen-Ingush families deported to Kyrgyzstan. According to Pchelkin, troikas immediately put special-settlers who previously worked in the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Chechen-Ingush ASSR and the Commissariat of Finances to work in provincial or republican organizations. “Iz dokladnoi zapiski Narkoma vnutrennikh del Kirgizskoi SSR A. A. Pchelkina Narkomu vnutrennikh del SSR L. P. Berii o prieme i rasselenii spetspereselentsev: chechentsev, ingushei i balkartsev v Kirgizskoi SSR,” April 22, 1944. GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 183, l. 37-48 in Kozlov, *Istoriia stalinskogo Gulaga*, vol. 5, 409-416.

¹⁰⁵ “Plan rasseleniia pribyvaiushchikh iz Karachaevskoi avtonomnoi oblasti v Kazakhskuiu i Kirgizskuiu SSR pereselentsev,” September 1943. GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 137, l. 34-37.

Skvortsov and Bogdanov, it was necessary to recruit these North Caucasians because there were not enough local officers who could run these government organizations.¹⁰⁷

The tone of their reports suggests that these officials were quite comfortable with deported personnel holding sensitive positions within the local administrative system. The main concern of officials like Skvortsov and Bogdanov was to ensure that commandant offices and government organs had enough administrative personnel to ensure the smooth functioning of the special-settlement regime. North Caucasian NKVD officers sometimes constituted a significant portion of these administrative personnel. For example, in July 1944 Head of the Almaty Provincial NKVD Organization Martynov reported to Kruglov and Bogdanov that the administrative staff of the central commandant office in the region consisted of 60 personnel.¹⁰⁸ 27 of these Kazakh NKVD employees were Russians, 16 were Chechens, and eight were Kazakhs.¹⁰⁹

The integration of North Caucasian officials into the local government bureaucracy demonstrates that the Soviet and Kazakh NKVDs based their policies towards these special-settlers, in significant measure, on solving practical administrative problems. Officers like Chernyshev and Bogdanov did not treat every North Caucasian deportee as an enemy of Soviet power, and they were quick to coopt useful individuals among the North Caucasians to ensure the smooth functioning of the special-settlement regime. These officials proved quite willing to treat the North Caucasians as a differentiated population when it suited their purposes. This was

¹⁰⁶ “Doklad ob itogakh rasseleniia i khoziastvenno-bytovom i trudovom ustroistve spetspereselentsev Severnogo Kavkaza v Kazakhskoi SSR”. April 22, 1944. GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 183, l. 13.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 168, l. 19-26. July 27, 1944.

¹⁰⁹ The remaining nine special commandant employees were members of “other nationalities.”

something that Soviet and Kazakh NKVD officers were far less willing to do with the Soviet Germans, suggesting that they considered the North Caucasians to be more loyal than the German special-settlers. This policy also qualifies the assertion that Party and government leaders in Moscow and Almaty considered the North Caucasians to be irredeemably anti-Soviet. Although North Caucasian NKVD officers were still subject to the special-settlement regime, the Soviet and Kazakh NKVDs considered them reliable enough to serve the Soviet system by administering their fellow deportees.

The sense that the North Caucasian special-settlers were more loyal than the Soviet Germans did not translate into clear policies towards native-language instruction among the Balkars, Chechens, Ingush, and Karachays, however. In June 1944, Beria wrote a letter to GKO member Viacheslav Molotov arguing that instructing the North Caucasian deportees in their native languages was unfeasible because there were so few reliable teachers among the deportees and the North Caucasians were thinly interspersed throughout Central Asia.¹¹⁰ It seems, however, that the Kazakh NKVD did not turn Beria's recommendation into official policy, since regional NKVD officials continued to express confusion about the correct language of instruction in schools with North Caucasian pupils. For example, in June 1944 Martynov sent a telegram to Kruglov and Beria requesting that the NKVD chiefs clarify the proper way to educate Chechen, Ingush, Karachay, and Balkar children during the coming 1944-1945 school year in Almaty province.¹¹¹ According to Martynov, no one in the Soviet NKVD apparatus had told him whether these deported children should be educated in their native languages in addition to Russian, or only in Russian. Martynov indicated that he wished to receive official

¹¹⁰ GARF f. 9401, o. 2, d. 69, l. 304-305. June 19, 1944. Cited in Westren, "Nations in Exile," 188-189.

¹¹¹ June 15, 1944. GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 160, l. 89-103.

clarification on this issue, but he also repeated Beria's assertion that it was expedient to instruct these special-settlers in Russian only because the sheer size of Kazakhstan's special commandant regions made it "impossible to establish the necessary educational-methodological base" for educating the North Caucasians in their native languages. Martynov also indicated that native-language education was not feasible because there were not enough "proven pedagogical cadres" among the North Caucasian special-settlers who could work as schoolteachers.

Martynov's letter suggests that the Soviet and Kazakh NKVDs did not officially forbid native-language instruction among North Caucasian special-settlers as they did with the German deportees, but during the war local Kazakh NKVD officers like Martynov were unwilling to invest time and resources to preserve the linguistic identities of the Balkars, Chechens, Ingush, and Karachays. It is entirely possible that Martynov and his NKVD superiors hoped that the North Caucasian children would be eventually Russified and the question of native-language instruction would be rendered moot. In any case, the educational policies implemented by the Soviet and Kazakh NKVD organizations did nothing to clarify the ambiguous place of the North Caucasians in Kazakhstan's society.

The propaganda policies of the Soviet and Kazakh Communist Parties towards the North Caucasian deportees reinforced their ambiguous social and political status. During the war, the Kazakh Communist Party did attempt to use propaganda as a device to boost economic production among the North Caucasians in imitation of its agitprop efforts among Slavs and Kazakhs (see pages 200-216). Propagandizing among the North Caucasian special-settlers, however, proved to be even more difficult than among the republic's non-deported populations. Part of the problem was that relatively few Balkars, Chechens, Ingush, or Karachays understood Russian or Kazakh. One solution was to recruit deported Party and government officials to

conduct agitprop work, especially in regions where Kazakh NKVD informants reported the proliferation of “anti-Soviet attitudes” among deportees.¹¹² For example, in September 1944, the Almaty City Party Committee instructed local agitprop officials to recruit “the most advanced and literate Communists and Komsomol members from among special-settlers” attached to construction sites and other economic enterprises to work as propagandists.¹¹³ The purpose of this directive was twofold: not only would these “advanced” deportees propagandize in the native languages of their fellow special-settlers, their examples would hopefully encourage the North Caucasians to “fulfill and over-fulfill their production norms.”

The Kazakh Communist Party clearly intended for its propaganda campaign to transform the North Caucasians into productive workers. Party directives related to agitprop among these special-settlers, however, often meant little in practice. Whereas the wartime archival records of the Agitprop Section of the Kazakh Communist Party contain thousands of reports concerning propaganda among Slavs and Kazakhs, relatively few documents discuss agitprop among the North Caucasian special-settlers. Still, Kazakhstan’s government leaders were interested enough in the potential for propaganda to boost the labor productivity of these deportees to accuse local Kazakh Communist Party officials of neglecting agitprop work among the North Caucasians. The participants in the March 1945 Kazakh Sovnarkom conference dedicated to the administration of the North Caucasian special-settlers, for instance, criticized local Party organs for not conducting “mass-explanatory” work among the deportees.¹¹⁴ The conference presidium

¹¹² See GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 168, l. 19-26.

¹¹³ “Protokol #268 Zasedaniia Biuro Alma-Atinskogo gorodskogo komiteta KP(b)K ot “12 sentiabria 1944 goda.” APRK f. 412, o. 29, d. 48, l. 174-201.

¹¹⁴ APRK f. 708, o. 9, d. 3/4, l. 16-23.

expressed particular annoyance that agitprop workers were failing to propagandize the labor feats of Stakhanovite deportees who could inspire their fellow deportees with “heroic feats of labor.”

In order to compensate for the Kazakh Communist Party’s alleged failure to propagandize among the North Caucasian deportees, the Soviet NKVD leaned heavily on deported religious figures to pacify these special-settlers and increase their economic productivity. Sometime before January 27, 1945, Chernyshev and Deputy Soviet NKVD head Kobulov ordered the NKVD and NKGB organizations of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan to identify deported mullahs for potential induction into the Soviet Union’s Muslim Spiritual Administration.¹¹⁵ According to this directive, these mullahs were to work with SADUM to open mosques and propagandize among the North Caucasian deportees. To facilitate this goal, Chernyshev and Kobulov instructed the NKVD and NKGB organizations of these republics to give these deported mullahs “lighter and more profitable work” as well as “other state benefits” to foster “loyal and desirable sentiments.” This directive also instructed Uzbekistan’s NKVD organization to translate Koranic verses and hadiths into Chechen, Ingush, and Karachay and distribute these texts to the North Caucasian special-settlers, focusing on passages that enjoined them to “labor selflessly” and “submit to government authorities.” Chernyshev and Kobulov were explicit about the ultimate goal of these measures, which was to “split the [anti-Soviet] Muslim clergy from the special-settlers and gradually turn the special-settlers towards loyal and honest agricultural work.”

Like the NKVD effort to coopt Kazakh religious authorities (see pages 217-221), the Soviet NKVD and NKGB organizations were attempting to use the North Caucasian mullahs as a channel to disseminate pro-Soviet propaganda that, at least in theory, would convince the

¹¹⁵ GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 154, l. 38-40.

special-settlers to accept their degraded status in exile and labor for the sake of Soviet power. Most likely, the cooptation of these North Caucasian mullahs was a measure of expediency designed to placate these special-settlers on the cheap. It was, after all, undoubtedly less expensive to provide extra benefits to a small and privileged group of mullahs rather than constructing a Kazakh Communist Party propaganda network among the North Caucasians, especially considering that the Kazakh Party barely had enough resources to conduct agitprop work among the Kazakh population (see pages 200-216). Overall, the available evidence indicates that the wartime Kazakh Communist Party demonstrated little interest in convincing the North Caucasian deportees that they were members of Kazakhstan's society on par with Slavs and Kazakhs. Kazakh Party officials were very willing to coopt North Caucasian religious figures and use them as mouthpieces for the regime, but the goal of these officials was to maintain stability in the special-settlements and extract labor from the deportees. We now turn to the dynamics of labor exploitation inside Kazakhstan's North Caucasian special-settlements.

"They do not have the Capacity to Work": The Labor Mobilization of the North Caucasians

The deportation of the North Caucasians in 1943-1944 took place in a very different geopolitical environment compared to when the NKVD relocated the Soviet Germans in the summer and fall of 1941. After the Red Army defeated the Nazis at Stalingrad in February 1943 and Kursk in August of that year, the Wehrmacht was retreating on all fronts. When the NKVD deported the North Caucasians to Kazakhstan, the prospect of a Soviet victory was not a question of if but when. That said, in 1943-1944 the Red Army still required enormous amounts of foodstuffs and equipment to sustain its westward drive into Eastern Europe and Germany, and Soviet leaders expected Kazakhstan to contribute to the reconstruction of the liberated regions of

the western Soviet Union (see pages 163-179). For these reasons, the Kazakh NKVD and Kazakh Communist Party mobilized the North Caucasian deportees for labor and obligated them to engage in “socially useful labor on collective farms, state farms, and in other state [gosudarstvennye] and cooperative organizations.”¹¹⁶ As the final Soviet victory grew nearer, however, local Party and government officials in Kazakhstan expressed increasing frustration at their inability to put the North Caucasians to “rational economic use.” As a result, these officials sought to avoid responsibility for attending to the basic needs of the North Caucasian special-settlers, leading to the further deterioration of their living conditions and underlining their interstitial position in Kazakhstan’s society.

In January 1944, the GKO ordered the Sovnarkoms of the Kazakh and Kyrgyz republics to put all deported North Caucasian farmers to work on state and collective farms and to employ all exiled industrial workers and white-collar employees in urban enterprises.¹¹⁷ During the war, the majority of North Caucasian special-settlers in Kazakhstan worked as agriculturalists harvesting grain in northern provinces and industrial crops such as sugar beets, cotton, and tobacco in the southern provinces.¹¹⁸ The North Caucasian deportees also worked in a variety of other economic spheres, however. According to official data analyzed by the Russian historian Nikolai Bugai, local Party and government officials put these special-settlers to work in 65 economic sectors ranging from coal mining to non-ferrous metallurgy.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Kozlov, *Istoriia stalinskogo Gulaga*, vol. 5, 403.

¹¹⁷ “O Meropriiatiakh po razmeshcheniu spetspereselentsev v predelakh Kazakhskoi i Kirgizskoi SSR,” January 31 1944. GARF f. 9479, cited in N. F. Bugai and A. M. Gonov, *Kavkaz: Narody v eshelonakh, 20-60-e gody* (Moscow, 1998), 244-245.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 245.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 250-254.

The documentary record indicates that the GKO and other central organ in Moscow were quick to issue decrees ordering the maximum labor mobilization of the deportees, but like with the German special-settlers, it proved extremely difficult for Kazakhstan's local Party and government officials to implement these directives on the ground. According to Kazakh NKVD reports, unemployment among the North Caucasian exiles reached crisis proportions in the spring of 1944. Rather than blaming the North Caucasians for this situation, the leaders of the Kazakh NKVD maintained that local officials were failing to establish the necessary conditions for productive labor. A typical April 1944 special communiqué from Bogdanov to Chernyshev indicated that only 1,500-1,800 Chechen, Ingush, and Balkar deportees out of 6,043 were employed on the collective farms of Shuchinsk district in Aqmola province.¹²⁰ According to Bogdanov, the remaining 4,243-4,543 North Caucasian deportees were "idle," i.e. not engaged in agricultural labor. Bogdanov's communiqué also maintained that in a number of districts of Zhambyl Province, exiled North Caucasians had become so desperate for work that they were forming groups on their own initiative to petition collective farm managers for employment. These chairpersons, however, were generally refusing these petitions and callously leaving these special-settlers without any source of income.

Bogdanov's communiqué to Chernyshev highlighted the case of a certain Aligbaev, the chairman of the Lenin Collective Farm in the Yellow Water (*Sarysu*) district. Aligbaev allegedly told a group of Chechen special-settlers that rather than give them work, he would throw them off his collective farm and force them to go to the local NKVD commandant office to request food rations. By piling blame onto collective farm managers like Aligbaev, Bogdanov could feasibly claim that the Kazakh NKVD was not responsible for either the poor employment

¹²⁰ "Spetssoobshchenie o nastroeniakh povedenii spetspereselentsev Severnogo Kavkaza – chechentsev, ingushei, balkartsev." GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 183, l. 239-243. April 12, 1944.

situation among the North Caucasians or their rapidly deteriorating living conditions. It is almost certain that many collective farm managers in Kazakhstan were prejudiced against the North Caucasian deportees, but Bogdanov's communiqué glossed over the fact that the Soviet and Kazakh NKVDs had put these officials in an impossible situation by "settling" huge numbers of deportees on collective farms already struggling to feed local farmers.

Aligbaev's hostile remarks to these Chechen special-settlers spoke to the widespread belief among Kazakhstan's local government officials that North Caucasians in general and Chechens and Ingush in particular were less conscientious workers than Slavs, Kazakhs, and Soviet Germans. Whereas Kazakh NKVD officers often described the German special-settlers as a vital boon to local workforces, local government officials were far more likely to describe North Caucasian deportees as an economic burden. At the same time, Kazakh Communist Party and Kazakh NKVD investigators consistently reported that many North Caucasians were laboring productively on collective farms and in other economic enterprises despite the serious obstacles thrown in their way by local government officials. For example, an April 1944 report from Skvortsov and Bogdanov to Beria about the labor mobilization of the North Caucasian deportees claimed that many work brigades on collective and state farms consisting solely of Karachays, Chechens, Ingush, and Balkars regularly over-fulfilled their output norms by 110-140%, which was far above the output norms of many Kazakh and Russian work brigades.¹²¹

Reports from provincial Kazakh NKVD officers to their superiors in Almaty and Moscow often conformed to this pattern of describing the labor efforts of the North Caucasians in positive terms while blaming local government officials for labor shortfalls inside the special-settlements. A particularly revealing report from Head of the Qostanai Provincial NKVD

¹²¹ "Doklad ob itogakh rasseleniia i khoziastvenno-bytovom i trudovom ustroistve spetspereselentsev Severnogo Kavkaza v Kazakhskoi SSR." GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 183, l. 12-21.

Organization Rupasov to Kruglov and Bogdanov claimed that all Chechen and Ingush deportees healthy enough for work were employed and involved in the “labor process” [*trudovoi protsess*].¹²² According to Rupasov, the majority of these Chechens and Ingush were fulfilling and over-fulfilling their output norms on collective and state farms and many had received prizes and promotions for their labor efforts. Rupasov noted, however, that local soviet officials had failed to supply these special-settlers with clothing and footwear in adequate quantities, and if the Kazakh Sovnarkom did not release special funds to purchase these items, the agricultural campaign in Qostanai province would suffer a serious setback because sickness would proliferate among the deportees with the onset of cold weather. The language that Rupasov employed in his report had the trappings of humanitarian concern, but in the end, he was speaking to utilitarian economic concerns more than anything else. In Rupasov’s view, local soviet officials had a duty to provide for the basic needs of these North Caucasians because they were economically useful, not because he considered them a constituent part of Kazakhstan’s society.

During the summer of 1944, provincial NKVD officers in Kazakhstan continued to complain that local government officials were failing to integrate the North Caucasian deportees into the republic’s workforce. For example, in June 1944 Head of the NKVD Organization of Kzyl-Orda province Ivan Shakhanskii reported to Bogdanov that only 5,192 “labor-capable” Chechen and Ingush special-settlers out of the 10,609 were at work on local collective farms.¹²³ Shakhanskii noted that only a few of these deportees were refusing to work or were avoiding labor by faking illnesses and committing other acts of subterfuge. In Shakhanskii’s estimation,

¹²² “Doklad “O trudovom ustroistve spetspereselentsev Severnogo Kavkaza rasselennykh v Kustanaiskoi oblasti i ikh agenturno-operativnom obsluzhivanii.” GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 167, l. 311-319.

¹²³ “Dokladnaia zapiska “Ob itogakh raboty sredi spetspereselentsev s Severnogo Kavkaza, za pervoe polugodie 1944 goda,” June 21, 1944. GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 168, l. 12-17.

the real problem was that many of the Chechen and Ingush deportees categorized as healthy enough for work by district officials were actually suffering from starvation and unspecified illnesses or were women with multiple children in districts with no childcare facilities.¹²⁴

Shakhanskii maintained that when local officials properly cared for Chechen and Ingush special-settlers by providing them with food, clothing and child-care facilities, they tended to work “in an exemplary manner.” Indeed, it seems that after local enterprise managers organized driver and machine-operator courses for young Chechens in Aral district, many of these special-settlers began working exceptionally well, and some even became field brigade heads and ship captains.¹²⁵

By the fall of 1944 at the latest, Kazakh Communist Party officials were beginning to articulate an obvious but previously unstated connection between improved living conditions and higher labor output among the North Caucasians. According to an indicative October 1944 report from Kazakh Communist Party inspector and Central Committee member Zalenskii about the “labor organization” of North Caucasian special-settlers in Taldyqorghhan Province, these deportees usually thrived as collective farmers when local Party and government officials provided them with even modest rations and barely habitable lodgings.¹²⁶ Zalenskii noted, however, that most of the collective farms in the province were a long way from offering these basic commodities – North Caucasians, especially invalids and other deportees incapable of work, were dying of starvation in “alarmingly high numbers” and often had no means of securing an income. From Zalenskii’s perspective, negligence and the resulting famine had transformed

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ APRK f. 708, o. 8, d. 1322, l. 1-6.

the deportees from a potential asset to the local economy into a major economic liability.

Zalenskii's tone echoed that of earlier Soviet NKVD reports about the German special-settlers.

It seems that Kazakh Communist Party leaders were equally capable of playing the scapegoating game, but in the case of the North Caucasian deportees, the consequences of this blame shifting were even more devastating. Seemingly, no official inside the Party and government apparatuses in Moscow or Kazakhstan was willing to take genuine responsibility for providing these special-settlers with their basic needs, and as a result their living conditions continued to deteriorate.

Many reports written by local Kazakh NKVD officers during the summer of 1944 echoed the assertions of Shakhanskii and Zalenskii that the Chechen and Ingush special-settlers were more of a burden to local collective farms than a benefit. In June 1944, for example, Head of the South-Kazakhstan NKVD Organization Fedotov reported to Kruglov and Bogdanov that a mere 16,052 out of 49,814 North Caucasian deportees in the province (32.2%) were physically capable of agricultural labor.¹²⁷ However, out of these healthy men and women, only 6,627 were actually working on state farms, and a mere 6,100 were laboring on collective farms.¹²⁸ According to Fedotov, Chechen and Ingush deportees working on collective farms rarely achieved even 60% of their agricultural output norms. In Fedotov's estimation, many of these underperforming Chechens and Ingush were "loafers" who faked illnesses and employed other artifices to avoid work. Fedotov also insisted, however, that the "unacceptable living conditions" of these deportees made it inevitable that they would attempt to avoid labor. Nonstop work shifts on collective farms were often a de facto death sentence for emaciated and sick special-settlers, and

¹²⁷ "Doklad. O polozhenii spetspereselentsev s Severnogo Kavkaza v Iuzhno-Kazakhstanskoi oblasti. Po sostoiianii na 15 iuniii 1944 g." GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 183, l. 205-213.

¹²⁸ Fedotov also reported that 2,123 North Caucasian special-settlers in the province were laboring in industrial enterprises and 1,202 were working on construction sites and in "other [economic] objects".

Fedotov maintained that Chechen and Ingush deportees were faking illnesses in order to survive. In any case, Fedotov made it clear to Kruglov and Bogdanov that it would be futile to initiate legal action against all of these “labor shirkers” because there were simply far too many to prosecute.

Fedotov’s report proposed a two-track solution for increasing agricultural productivity among these Chechen and Ingush special-settlers. First, he promised to arrest “malicious saboteurs” and any deportees who intentionally “disrupted labor discipline.” Second, Fedotov recommended that the South-Kazakhstan Provincial Party Committee and Komsomol organization “instill discipline” and “eliminate [work-related] abnormalities” among these Chechens and Ingush through systematic propaganda work. Fedotov was perfectly aware that many Chechens and Ingush in the province were starving and barely clinging to life, yet his recommendations made it seem as though their problem was a lack of “discipline” and a shaky ideological commitment to the Soviet cause that Party workers could correct through ideological indoctrination. Fedotov’s suggestion that agitprop could positively influence these special-settlers suggests that he did not see them as existing totally outside the bounds of Soviet society. At the same time, the ruthless utilitarianism that permeated his rhetoric suggests that he viewed the deportees primarily as economic objects whose sole function was to boost economic productivity.

The way provincial Kazakh NKVD officers depicted Chechen and Ingush special-settlers often contrasted noticeably with how these officers described Balkar and Karachay deportees.¹²⁹ Fedotov’s report to Bogdanov and Kruglov cited above, for example, claimed that Balkar and Karachay exiles in a number of districts of South-Kazakhstan province were attending to their

¹²⁹ See Bugai, *Narody v eshelonakh*, 246-258.

work on collective farms in a more conscientious manner than local Slavs and Kazakhs.¹³⁰

Fedotov even noted that in some cases, Balkar and Karachay special-settlers under the age of 16 and over the age of 55 were volunteering for agricultural work even though they were not required to do so.¹³¹ Unfortunately, Fedotov did not indicate why he perceived these Balkars and Karachays to be better workers than the Chechens and Ingush. It is possible that the Balkar and Karachay special-settlers were better accustomed to agriculture compared to the Chechen and Ingush deportees because the Chechen-Ingush ASSR was very mountainous and the region's population did not practice extensive agriculture. What is clear, however, is that at least some local Kazakh NKVD officers saw the North Caucasian "contingent" as a differentiated group with some members who were useful and some members who were a liability.¹³²

By the end of 1944, officials at every level of Kazakhstan's Party and government apparatuses were expressing concern about unemployment and low work productivity among the Chechen and Ingush special-settlers. The documentary evidence suggests that these problems were, at least in part, an outcome of a self-fulfilling prophecy. It seems that local collective farm managers and soviet officials expected the Chechens and Ingush to be poor workers and as a result, refused to provide them with food, occupational training, and employment. Because the ability to work in support of the war effort became an increasingly important criterion of social inclusion in Kazakhstan and the rest of the Soviet Union from 1941 to 1945, these Chechen and

¹³⁰ GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 183, l. 205-213.

¹³¹ It seems likely that these dependents volunteered for work in order to contribute to their families' income.

¹³² According to the historian Ismail Aliev, the Karachays were such good workers that when Soviet authorities began discussing their return to the Caucasus after Stalin's death, local authorities requested that they remain in Kazakhstan and even offered to form an autonomous region for them. Aliev, "Shleif bed i stradanii: Zametki o 'karachaevskom voprose'," in Alieva, *Tak eto bylo*, vol. 2, 7-36.

Ingush deportees had little hope of becoming effective laborers and thus becoming full-fledged members of society.

NKVD and Kazakh Communist Party reports about the North Caucasians reveal another, more subtle institutional dynamic that contributed to the creation of hopeless living and working conditions inside the special-settlements. It was hardly coincidental that most of these reports assigned most of the blame for poor living and working conditions among the North Caucasian deportees to the least influential members of Kazakhstan's Party and government apparatuses - collective farm managers and district soviet officials. It is entirely possible, if not likely, that some of these officials were in fact guilty of criminal indifference towards these special-settlers. At the same time, Kazakhstan's republican leaders provided very little material and administrative support to these local officials in settling the North Caucasians and integrating them into the local workforce. The Soviet NKVD was even more distant from the day-to-day problems afflicting the North Caucasian special-settlers. By devolving responsibility for these deportees onto the Kazakh Communist Party, Kazakh Sovnarkom, and Kazakh NKVD, the Soviet NKVD maintained the appearance of administrative control when in fact it had very little. The directors of the Soviet NKVD had much to gain from perpetuating this dysfunctional administrative dynamic – namely, the ability to plausibly deny responsibility for the perpetuation of hellish conditions inside the special-settlements.

This administrative dynamic became even more pronounced in 1945. During the final year of the war, local Party and government officials in Kazakhstan increasingly treated the North Caucasian deportees as unwanted economic commodities and shuffled them to different enterprises and regions to avoid taking responsibility for them. One case involving the Commissariat of Forestry demonstrates the negative effects this practice could have on the North

Caucasian special-settlers. In March 1945, Soviet Commissar of the Forest Industry Mikhail Saltykov sent a memorandum to the Commercial Director of the Soviet Sovnarkom Iakov Chadaev complaining that unidentified officials in Kazakhstan had redeployed 1,156 Chechen, Ingush, and Balkar special-settlers from the republic to the forestry enterprises of Vologda Province in Russia, evidently without the proper authorization from Moscow.¹³³ Most of these deportees arrived starved and weakened, many of them were sick, and virtually none were wearing serviceable clothes, shoes, or undergarments. Many of the North Caucasians were so sick that they required immediate hospitalization. In his memorandum, Saltykov claimed that after forestry managers in Vologda province informed him about this mass influx of North Caucasian special-settlers, he had little choice but to order these managers to supply emergency rations and clothing to the deportees to prevent them from dying. Saltykov made it clear, however, that these deportees were placing an unacceptable financial burden on these forestry enterprises, and he requested that Chadaev either send more supplies to Vologda province for the North Caucasians or arrange for their return to Kazakhstan.

Saltykov's memorandum strongly implied that local officials in Kazakhstan had relocated these special-settlers to Vologda province to avoid taking responsibility for them. During the war, local Party and government officials in the republic used a variety of strategies to retain control over Slavic and Central Asian workers and keep them inside Kazakhstan (see pages 141-163), but by 1945, it appears that some officials were using similar strategies to avoid taking responsibility for North Caucasian workers by sending them to other regions. It is possible, of

¹³³ GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 153, l. 37. March 17, 1945. Chadaev was a powerful economist and member of the Soviet Sovnarkom who regularly issued government decrees cosigned by Stalin. V. I. Ivkin, *Gosudarstvennaia vlast' SSSR: vysshie organy vlasti i upravleniia i ikh rukovoditeli, 1923-1991: istoriko-biograficheskii spravochnik* (Moscow, 1999), 581. Chadaev does not elaborate how these officials moved so many North Caucasians without the permission or even knowledge of governing institutions in Moscow.

course, that the Soviet Commissariat of Forestry requested the transfer of these North Caucasians to Vologda province to boost the output of local forestry enterprises, but once they arrived and forestry managers saw that these deportees were incapable of working, they petitioned Saltykov to send them back to Kazakhstan. This *delo* does not contain any response from Chadaev, so it is unclear how this issue was resolved. It is obvious, however, that this group of North Caucasian special-settlers had few allies inside the Soviet ruling apparatus, and government officials commonly saw them as a serious economic burden.

During the final days of the war, bureaucratic arguments over who was responsible for caring for poor and starving special-settlers became increasingly common inside Kazakhstan. In one tragic but typical episode, Chernyshev sent a directive to Bogdanov and Commissar of the Soviet Oil Industry Nikolai Baibakov in May 1945 highlighting the poor living conditions of special-settlers deported from Crimea and mobilized for work in the oil enterprises of Guryev province.¹³⁴ According to Chernyshev, a Soviet NKVD inspection revealed that a “large portion” of these deportees could not go to work because they lacked clothes and shoes, and even more alarmingly, the Commissariat of Oil was failing to provide them with state-mandated food supplies. As a result, many special-settlers working on oil derricks were starving and could not fulfill their mandatory output norms. These deportees were not receiving enough wages to buy food, leading to their continued physical deterioration. This situation was “impermissible” according to Chernyshev, and he requested that Baibakov implement “immediate measures” to improve the living conditions of the oil trust’s special-settler contingent.

¹³⁴ GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 154, l. 244. This report does not indicate the nationalities of these special-settlers, but at this time, there were many Bulgarian, Crimean Tatar, and Greek deportees laboring in these oil enterprises. See “‘Usloviia nezavidnye, a rabota ochen’ tiazhelaia’: Trudovaia armiiia na stroitel’stve neftepererabatyvaiushchego zavoda v Gur’eve. 1943-1945 gg.” *Istoricheskii arkhiv: nauchno-publikatorskii zhurnal*, vol. 4: (2010), 15-34.

Approximately two months later, Deputy Commissar of the Soviet Oil Industry Mikhail Evseenko responded to Chernyshev's directive with a defensively worded telegram.¹³⁵ Evseenko claimed that he had long been aware that the oil enterprises of Guryev province lacked the supplies to care for a large number of special-settler families, and for this reason, he had requested that the Soviet NKVD transfer these families to a region outside Kazakhstan where they could be adequately fed and clothed. According to Evseenko, unidentified officials informed him that there were no regions suitable for this transfer and they refused his request. Evseenko continued his telegram to Chernyshev by dubiously maintained that the living conditions of the special-settlers working in these oil industries were indeed poor, but they were essentially the same as those of the Oil Trust's regular, non-deported workers. Responding to the accusation that Trust authorities were failing to supply enough food to the deportees, Evseenko pointed out that out of the 4,064 special-settlers attached to the Trust, only 1,700 could actually work and the rest were children and others dependents. According to Evseenko, the Trust simply lacked the resources to supply these dependents with living space, food, and manufactured household items. In light of these facts, Evseenko again requested that Chernyshev transfer these special-settler families to another region.¹³⁶

The disagreement between Chernyshev and Evseenko over living conditions among the special-settlers attached to this Oil Trust pointed to a more general tension between the labor mobilization plans of Party and government officials in Moscow on the one hand and realities on the ground on the other. Central officials like Chernyshev viewed the special-settlers primarily as workers who local Party and government officials were to exploit and integrate into regional

¹³⁵ GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 154, l. 245. July 5, 1945.

¹³⁶ There is no document in this *delo* indicating whether Chernyshov assented to Evseenko's request to transfer these special-settlers.

workforces in a streamlined and efficient manner. These local officials, however, often viewed the deportees as extra mouths to feed in the lean conditions of war. This was especially true in the case of North Caucasian special-settlers in general and the Chechens and Ingush in particular. In the end, however, the protestations and complaints of officials like Chernyshev and Evseenko could not obscure the fact that the deportees were suffering tremendously thanks to their ambiguous status in Kazakhstan's social and national hierarchy.

Conclusion

In June 1944, the East-Kazakhstan Provincial Party Committee issued an internal report describing the living and working conditions of Chechen special-settlers deported to the region.¹³⁷ This report paid particular attention to the case of a Party member named Almaevym Bassa, a special-settler who was working in a local forestry enterprise. According to this report, Bassa frequently complained to local government officials that his low position in this forestry enterprise was incommensurate with his position in Soviet society before deportation. Bassa maintained that despite the fact that he had been a doctor and collective farm chairman in the Chechen-Ingush ASSR and had "been to Moscow twice," government officials had consigned him to dragging wood and working at other menial tasks in East-Kazakhstan province. Bassa strongly maintained that his Party membership and professional credentials entitled him to better treatment and less difficult work. In any case, Bassa made it clear that he could not tolerate his de facto professional demotion nor the terrible conditions in which his family was living, especially since one of his children had already died in exile and his other child was extremely

¹³⁷ APRK f. 708, o. 8, d. 1772, l. 17-23. June 26, 144.

ill. Citing this litany of “humiliations and abuses,” Bassa informed the East-Kazakhstan Party Committee that he was renouncing his membership in the Communist Party.

Bassa’s complaints to the East-Kazakhstan Party Committee were suffused with the pain of someone whose life had been ruined by deportation. These grievances also spoke to his ambiguous place in Kazakhstan’s society after deportation. After arriving in East-Kazakhstan province, Bassa was still a Party member with many of the same rights as Slavic and Kazakh citizens. At the same time, the NKVD confined him to a special-settlement where he and his family lived and worked in terrible conditions. Party and government officials used the ambiguous status of special-settlers like Bassa to justify their exploitation as workers. This does not mean, however, that Party and government officials in Moscow, Almaty, and Kazakhstan’s provinces treated the deportees as a homogenous mass. Local officials expressed frequent satisfaction and even enthusiasm about the labor efforts of German, Balkar, and Karachay special-settlers, but many of these same authorities grew so exasperated by their inability to integrate the Chechens and Ingush into the local economy that they attempted to avoid all responsibility for their survival.

Labor mobilization in wartime Kazakhstan was a total phenomenon because it encompassed every population group inside the republic. This chapter demonstrates, however, that Party and government authorities did not use the same strategies to mobilize Kazakhstan’s different national groups. To be sure, these officials heavily exploited the labor of the Kazakhs, but as Chapter Four argues, the Kazakh Communist Party also sought to demonstrate to this group that they were full-fledged members of the Soviet community of nations. Party and government leaders in Moscow and Kazakhstan, in contrast, made virtually no attempt to integrate the Soviet Germans and North Caucasians into the broader Soviet community. The

Soviet leadership effectively wrote these groups out of the victorious wartime saga and Soviet society as a whole. The tragedy of the deportations was thus twofold. Not only did these forced population movements kill well over 300,000 innocent people, they created an entire category of Soviet citizens who had no clear position in Kazakhstan's society and who were especially vulnerable to ruthless labor exploitation.

Chapter 6 – The Internal War: Surveillance and Repression in Wartime Kazakhstan

In June 1944, Head of the NKVD organization of Kzyl-Orda province Ivan Shakhanskii sent a report to Kazakh NKVD head Nikolai Bogdanov summarizing the results of “agent-operational” work - essentially spying and surveillance among recently arrived North Caucasian deportees.¹ Shakhanskii devoted particular attention to one case codenamed *VRAG* (enemy) that centered on a Chechen deportee named Khamid Tsitsigov. According to the NKVD organization of Qarmaqshy district, Tsitsigov was a “former active bandit” who deserted from the Red Army in 1942 and joined a Nazi paratrooper unit. After the Red Army “liquidated” this unit, Tsitsigov fled, but the NKVD captured him and exiled him to Kazakhstan. According to Shakhanskii, Tsitsigov still posed a potent threat to state security even after deportation. This report maintained that Tsitsigov was continuing his “anti-Soviet” activities in exile, activities that included assembling a group of “bandit elements” in Qarmaqshy district and making plans to flee to the Caucasus and join the armed bands still operating there.

Shakhanskii’s report to Bogdanov was part of a wider institutional and ideological trend inside the Soviet and Kazakh NKVD apparatuses that began during the late 1930s. From 1938 to 1945, Soviet and Kazakh NKVD officers used surveillance reports [*svodki*] to construct a narrative about a fifth column that was working to undermine Soviet authority in Kazakhstan by cooperating with the Nazis and other nefarious “anti-Soviet” groups. According to these *svodki*, deportees were not the only members of this imaginary fifth column – it also included

¹ June 21, 1944. GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 168, l. 12-17. Shakhanskii was born in Samarsk *guberniia* in 1906. An orphan from a young age, Shakhanskii, served in the Red Army during the late 1920s and joined the GPU in 1929. During the 1930s, he served as a high-ranking officer in the provincial OGPU-NKVD organizations of a number of provinces in Kazakhstan. He was head of the NKVD-MVD organization of Kzyl-Orda Province from July 1943 to September 1946. He retired from the MVD in 1958. Petrov, *Kto rukovodil organami gosbezopasnosti*, 923-924.

“counterrevolutionary elements” among the republic’s Slavic and Kazakh populations. The Soviet and Kazakh NKVD organizations, along with the leaders of the Kazakh Communist Party, maintained that the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union and the arrival of the “traitorous” Soviet Germans and North Caucasians had energized this fifth column and caused it to intensify its efforts to undermine Soviet power and sabotage the mobilizational effort. In response, these organizations launched a covert war that extended the violence of the frontlines to Kazakhstan.

The historian Peter Holquist has argued that Soviet surveillance reports reveal considerably more about the regime that produced them than about their subjects of inquiry.² For Holquist, Soviet surveillance during the 1920s was a manifestation of a novel pan-European trend. He demonstrates that during the late 19th century European governments began collecting comprehensive data about the political attitudes of their populations in order to reshape these attitudes in accordance with the ideological dictates of the state. Holquist maintains that in the Soviet case, surveillance had an even more grandiose function because Bolshevik leaders saw it as a critical tool for creating a socialist “new man.”³ Expanding this line of inquiry, the historians Amir Weiner and Aigi Rahi-Tamm maintain that surveillance was a key tool used by Stalinist

² Peter Holquist, “Information Is the Alpha and Omega of our Work: Bolshevik Surveillance in Its Pan-European Context,” *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 69 (3): (1997), 415-450. The first scholarly work that made substantial use of Stalin-era *svodki* was Sarah Davies’ *Popular Opinion in Stalin’s Russia: Terror, Propaganda and Dissent, 1934-1941* (Cambridge UK, 1997). Analyzing NKVD reports about conversations, rumors, jokes, and other remarks made by Soviet citizens in Leningrad Province, Davies argues that Soviet citizens expressed themselves in significant measure by adopting and manipulating the official language of the regime. The historian Lesley Rimmel also treats *svodki* as important sources for understanding public opinion in Leningrad Province during the 1930s. Lesley A. Rimmel, “Svodki and Popular Opinion in Stalinist Leningrad,” *Cahiers du monde russe*, vol. 40 (1/2): 217-234. Rimmel acknowledges that surveillance reports are not fully translucent windows onto public opinion because of their intensely ideological nature and their tendency to focus on “anti-Soviet” and other negative remarks, but she asserts that these *svodki* still offer a useful way of uncovering an “archeology of knowledge” - a glimpse into the hidden repository of private thought during the Stalin period. *Ibid*, 233-234.

³ Holquist, “Information Is the Alpha and Omega of Our Work,” 447. Jochen Hellbeck makes a similar point, arguing that the content of NKVD *svodki* reflected “the ideological commitment of the Soviet regime” and not “people’s genuine moods.” See his “Speaking Out: Languages of Affirmation and Dissent in Stalinist Russia,” *Kritika*, vol. 1 (1): (Winter 2000), 71-96.

authorities to Sovietize the western borderlands annexed in 1939.⁴ According to Weiner and Rahi-Tamm, the NKVD (and its KGB successors) did not engage in mass surveillance in the western borderlands to acquire an objective picture of political opinion in these regions. On the contrary, the two historians argue that the NKVD and KGB were obsessed with identifying and repressing real and imagined “anti-Soviet” groups and individuals in these territories because they were paving the way for the restructuring of these societies in accordance with the worldview of the Soviet leadership.⁵ By identifying and imprisoning the most visible representatives of the pre-Soviet past such as the “bourgeoisie” and “kulaks,” the Soviet security services were assisting the Communist Party and government in instantiating their version of socialist reality in these territories.

The historian Paul Hagenloh, in a significant contribution to our understanding of Stalinist repression, has recently argued that the Communist Party and Soviet police intensified repression during the 1930s and 1940s primarily in order to “quarantine” groups such as diaspora nationalities and social “marginals” that they considered a threat to state security.⁶ In Hagenloh’s estimation, the intensification of repression during this period stemmed from the failure of Stalinist authorities to implement their utopian socialist vision. By the late 1930s, Stalinist officials were increasingly concerned with mundane objectives such as maintaining social stability rather than with attempting to remold Soviet society. For this reason, the ultimate objective of repression in Hagenloh’s estimation was to “affix” Soviet ethnic and social groups to “hierarchical positions in political and social space.” Building on the findings of Holquist,

⁴ Weiner and Aigi Rahi-Tamm, “Getting to Know You: The Soviet Surveillance System, 1939-57,” *Kritika*, vol. 13 (1): (Winter 2012), 5-45.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 41-45.

⁶ Hagenloh, *Stalin’s Police*. These marginal populations included petty criminals, the homeless, and other itinerants.

Weiner, Rahi-Tamm, and Hagenloh while heeding the historian Kuromiya Hiroaki's call to analyze NKVD reports in their proper ideological context, this chapter asserts that wartime Soviet and Kazakh NKVD officers used surveillance and repression as tools to assign Kazakhstan's nationalities to an ideologically constructed hierarchy of loyalty.⁷

Historians interested in Stalinist repression during the Great Patriotic War have mostly focused on the western Ukraine and the Baltic States, regions buffeted by large-scale anti-Soviet insurgencies immediately after the Nazi invasion in 1941 and after reoccupation by the Red Army in 1944.⁸ These insurgencies were unique in the wartime Soviet Union because of their popular characters and explicitly nationalist orientations.⁹ During the war, there were no uprisings in Kazakhstan on anything approaching this scale. Nevertheless, the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 accelerated the efforts of the Soviet and Kazakh NKVD organizations to determine which social and national groups in the republic were loyal to the Soviet system and which were not. The result of this inquisitorial campaign was a new wave of terror that assumed an increasingly national rather than class-based orientation as the war progressed.¹⁰ From the perspective of Soviet leaders in Moscow and Almaty, this repressive campaign facilitated three interrelated objectives inside Kazakhstan: terrorizing workers and collective farmers into working harder, legitimizing the existence of the special-settlement regime, and categorizing the republic's population according to criteria of "loyalty" and "disloyalty." As this chapter will argue, these were not wholly new developments in Kazakhstan's history – they were, in significant measure, intensified trends from the 1930s.

⁷ Kuromiya, *The Voices of the Dead: Stalin's Great Terror in the 1930s* (New Haven, 2007), 9.

⁸ See especially Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, 239-297.

⁹ Alfred J. Rieber, "Civil Wars in the Soviet Union," *Kritika*, vol. 4 (1): (Winter 2003), 129-162.

¹⁰ Siegelbaum, *Broad is My Native Land*, 315.

“Anti-Soviet Elements Have Been Activated”: Wartime Repression as a Continuation of the Great Terror

Most recent monographs about terror and repression in the Stalinist Soviet Union argue that Communist Party and police officials demonstrated less concern with executing, imprisoning, and exiling class and other socioeconomically based enemies as the 1930s progressed. Amir Weiner, for example, asserts that during the late 1930s the Soviet security services transitioned away from the persecution of imagined socioeconomic groups like the kulaks to the deportation of entire ethnic groups.¹¹ In Weiner’s estimation, this “ethnicization” of Stalinist terror laid the administrative and ideological foundation for wartime and postwar efforts to purify the Soviet body politic by isolating and eradicating “anti-Soviet” groups that Soviet leaders considered “irredeemable.”¹² The historian David Shearer offers a different explanation for the expansion of mass terror during the 1930s and 1940s, arguing that Soviet police increasingly focused on repressing “social deviants” such as petty criminals and the homeless.¹³ For Shearer, these campaigns were part of the Stalinist drive to engineer a conflict-free socialist society while maintaining social stability. By politicizing social-deviancy and declaring these “marginals” to be anti-Soviet, the political and criminal police “turned the campaign for public order into a new phase of class war” while simultaneously introducing a “martial law socialism” that gave the police extraordinary prerogatives to shape Soviet society.¹⁴

¹¹ Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, 138-149.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Shearer, *Policing Stalin’s Socialism*.

¹⁴ Ibid, 7-8.

During the Great Terror of 1937-1939, Kazakh NKVD officers fabricated vast conspiracies involving “counterrevolutionary” organizations led by prominent members of the Party and government apparatuses as well as the leading lights of the Kazakh intelligentsia.¹⁵ These “anti-Soviet” plots, like in the Soviet Union as a whole, “became central paradigms through which the regime sought to explain political processes and social conflicts.”¹⁶ For example, the Kazakh NKVD charged the major Kazakh writer Sāken Seifullin with leading a large anti-Soviet network composed of “Alash-Orda members, former tsarist military officers, Basmachi, mullahs, *bais*, and other anti-Soviet elements.”¹⁷ According to the Kazakh NKVD indictment, Seifullin joined a “bloc” led by Trotsky, Zinoviev, Bukharin, and Rykov in order to “overthrow Soviet power and restore capitalism” in Kazakhstan. Police investigators maintained that this bloc intended to accomplish its counterrevolutionary objectives by instigating insurgencies, conducting terrorist acts, engaging in espionage in consort with the Japanese and German intelligence services, and sabotaging Kazakhstan’s industrial and agricultural economy.¹⁸ The Kazakh NKVD levelled similarly fanciful charges against thousands of people in the republic during the Great Terror, and the victims of this campaign of mass repression

¹⁵ Kozybaev, *Istoriia Kazakhstana*, vol. 4, 426-433. The Great Terror began with the promulgation of Order 00447 by NKVD head Nikolai Ezhov in July 1937. The decree ordered the initiation of a comprehensive repressive campaign against “socially harmful elements”. Targeted groups included former kulaks, bandits, recidivist criminals, members of anti-Soviet parties, White Guardists, returned émigrés, Orthodox clergy, sectarians, gendarmes, and other former tsarist officials. Shearer, *Policing Stalin’s Socialism*, 295. The standard work on the Great Terror is Robert Conquest’s *The Great Terror: A Reassessment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

¹⁶ Gábor Tamás Rittersporn, “The Omnipresent Conspiracy: On Soviet Imagery of Politics and Social Relations in the 1930s,” in J. Arch Getty and Roberta T. Manning (eds.), *Stalinist Terror: New Perspectives* (Cambridge UK, 1993), 99-115.

¹⁷ Kozybaev, *Istoriia Kazakhstana*, vol. 4, 443-44. For the close connection between class hatred and the construction of enemies in the Stalinist “ecology of violence,” see Lynne Viola, “The Question of the Perpetrator in Soviet History,” *Slavic Review*, vol. 72 (1): (2013), 1-23.

¹⁸ For the ubiquity of espionage charges against victims of the Great Terror, see Kuromiya, *The Voices of the Dead*. The Kazakh NKVD executed Seifullin in 1939.

ranged from the lowliest collective farmer to the leaders of the Kazakh Communist Party itself.¹⁹ The Kazakh NKVD executed most of the accused or sentenced them to terms in corrective-labor camps.²⁰ During the late 1930s accusations of engaging in terrorism, conducting sabotage, and collaborating with foreign powers became the essential components of the Soviet regime's ubiquitous narrative of dissent and repression inside Kazakhstan and other Soviet regions.

Kazakh NKVD officers energetically reproduced this narrative during the Great Patriotic War. The available archival record does not allow for a statistical comparison of arrest rates, prison sentences, and numbers of executions in Kazakhstan during the Great Terror versus the Great Patriotic War, but it is clear that from 1941 to 1945 Kazakh NKVD officers reintroduced many of the same "enemy" categories that they constructed in 1937-1939. There were of course importance differences between the Soviet regimes of terror during these two periods. Perhaps most importantly, there is little evidence that the Kazakh NKVD targeted members of the Party-state apparatus and intelligentsia during the war as it did during the late 1930s. The victims of state terror in wartime Kazakhstan were mostly non-elites – workers, collective farmers, and other people with unexceptional backgrounds. The key factor that prompted the Kazakh NKVD to reintroduce mass terror in 1941 was the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union. In response to the very real Nazi threat, Kazakh NKVD officers in Almaty and in the republic's provinces

¹⁹ For example, in March 1937 the Ridder City Party Committee reported that it uncovered and destroyed an active "Trotskyist counterrevolutionary center" consisting of at least 24 members that was sabotaging economic enterprises in the city. "Reshenie biuro Ridderskogo gorkoma VKP(b) Vostochno-Kazakhstanskoi oblasti 'Ob obsuzhdenii sredi rabochikh i sluzhashchikh Riddera itogov sudebnogo protsesssa nad trotskistskimi kontrevolutsionnym tsentrom'" March 13, 1937. APRK f. 141 (Kazakh *krai* Committee of the all-Russian Communist Party), o. 1, d. 13340, l. 22-23 in I. N. Brukhonova, *Politicheskie repressii v Kazakhstane v 1937-1938 gg.* (Almaty, 1998), 43-46. 13 months later, the Kazakh NKVD claimed to have destroyed a "Dungan nationalist organization" by arresting all of its members. "Zhaloba A. Abdullaeva Sekretaru TsK KP(b)K L. Mirzoianu na nespravedlivoe obvinenie v prichastnosti k dunganskoi natsionalisticheskoi organizatsii," February 9, 1938. APRK f. 708, o. 1, d. 76, l. 112. In *ibid*, 167-169.

²⁰ Historians have yet to produce any kind of comprehensive statistics about the number of victims of the Great Terror in Kazakhstan.

constructed a narrative centering on the growth of an anti-Soviet “fifth column” in the republic. By the end of the war, this narrative had become so entrenched that Kazakh NKVD officers were using it to explain the persistence of a wide range of “anti-Soviet” behaviors.

Rumor as Sabotage: The Struggle against Rumormongering, 1941-1942

During the war, the Kazakh Communist Party and Kazakh NKVD maintained parallel networks of informants and agents who recorded all manner of popular expression such as conversations, rumors, jokes, and graffiti.²¹ According to internal reports and directives composed by Kazakh Communist Party and Kazakh NKVD officials, spreading rumors was one of the most prevalent forms of “anti-Soviet” behavior during the war. In July 1941, the Supreme Soviet promulgated a law that expanded the definition of “counterrevolutionary propaganda” to include the dissemination of “panic-inducing rumors.”²² For the remainder of the war, Procuracy and NKVD officials in the Soviet Union repressed “rumormongers” by subjecting “guilty” parties to a range of punishments ranging from two years imprisonment to the death penalty. Kazakh Communist Party and Kazakh NKVD officials expressed particular concern with pessimistic prognostications about the progress of the war and complaints about poor living conditions among workers and collective farmers. The validity of these “rumors” was not

²¹ The Secret-Political Department of the Communist Party administered its own network of informants, while the Secret-Political Department of the NKVD ran its own network of informants and agents. Davies, *Popular Opinion in Stalin's Russia*, 10-11. Local NKVD officers summarized the findings of informants and agents in *svodki* and sent them to the heads of district NKVD organizations. These NKVD district officers forwarded especially important reports to provincial NKVD organizations, which in turn forwarded reports to the Kazakh NKVD leadership in Almaty. Soviet NKVD officers sent their *svodki* directly to Kazakh NKVD and Party officials in Almaty and Moscow.

²² Evgenii Krinko, “Neformal’naia kommunikatsiia v ‘zakrytom’ obshchestve: slukhi voennogo vremeni: 1941-1945,” *Nesavisimyi filologicheskii zhurnal*, no. 100: (2009), <http://magazines.russ.ru/nlo/2009/100/kr37.html>. Last accessed January 18, 2014.

relevant to these officials. In general, they considered any statement even remotely critical of the Soviet system or pessimistic about the prospects of a Soviet victory to be worthy of extended investigation. During the war, the Kazakh Communist Party and Kazakh NKVD operated under the assumption that any idea contradicting the official line espoused by Party propagandists was anti-Soviet by definition. The leaders of these bodies were particularly sensitive to “fabrications” that “impaired labor discipline” by “inducing panic.”²³

Because the criminal act of spreading rumors encompassed a variety of statements that Kazakh Communist Party and Kazakh NKVD officials considered anti-Soviet, the line between intentional sabotage and irresponsible talk was often blurry, especially during the opening months of the war. An internal report disseminated within the Central Committee of the Kazakh Communist Party in August 1941 highlighted the tendency of Party leaders to conflate irresponsible rumors with statements supposedly meant to sabotage labor mobilization. This case involved a certain Mariia Stepanovna, an itinerant fortuneteller freed from the Karlag Gulag complex in 1940 who later appeared on the Dmitrov Collective Farm in North-Kazakhstan province, where police arrested her sometime before August 9, 1941.²⁴ According to this Kazakh Communist Party report, Stepanovna mendaciously told the Dmitrov collective farmers that their husbands and sons had been killed, wounded, or taken prisoner at the front, engendering “panic and tears” and making it psychologically impossible for them to do agricultural work. As the

²³ Stalinist authorities had been blaming “saboteurs” for economic failures since the Shakhty trial of 1928. As the 1930s progressed, the Soviet Communist Party and government ordered factory managers to replace specialists trained abroad or in imperial Russia with newly trained Soviet technicians. This promotion of “socialist cadres” however, did not reduce the regime’s obsession with uncovering “saboteurs”. During the Great Terror, the NKVD repressed these Soviet specialists in large numbers for perpetrating “sabotage”. Rittersporn, “The Omnipresent Conspiracy,” 101.

²⁴ “Postanovlenie biuro TsK KP(b)Kaz “O khode vypolneniia Ukaza prezidiuma Verkhovnogo soveta SSR ot 6 iulia sego goda “Ob otvetstvennosti za rasprostranenie v voennoe vremia lozhnykh slukhov, vzbuzhdaiushchikh trevogu sredi naseleniia”, August 9, 1941. In V. N. Shepel’ (ed.), *Rassekrechennaia voina: “osoby papki” TsK KP(b)Kazakhstan, 1941-1945 gg., sbornik dokumentov* (Almaty, 2010), 92-95.

war continued, the number of these kinds of criminal cases against disseminators of false information steadily increased in Kazakhstan. Over time, these cases increasingly focused on the “anti-Soviet” activities of unofficial Islamic authorities.

Accusing Kazakhstan’s Muslims of engaging in conspiratorial pan-Islamic activities was not a new habit for Kazakh NKVD and Kazakh Communist Party officials. For example, in October 1940 Military Procurator of the Almaty Garrison Budyuk sent a brief report to Skvortsov indicating that his office had recently arrested 12 “participants in a counterrevolutionary pan-Islamist organization” which had infiltrated the Kazakh NKVD.²⁵ After the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, official reports concerning underground Islamic organizations became far more pervasive and the tenor of these reports reached new heights of paranoia. For example, a top-secret August 1941 directive from Skvortsov to provincial Party organizations in the republic claimed that a massive pan-Islamic underground movement was growing inside the republic directed by mullahs and other representatives of the “Muslim clergy.”²⁶

According to Skvortsov, rumormongering was the favorite tactic of these anti-Soviet mullahs. These Islamic authority figures were supposedly spreading “demoralizing” and “insurgent” attitudes among the “Muslim faithful” while advocating a German victory under the guise of reading the Koran in public and conducting religious ceremonies. Skvortsov maintained that these “hostile clergymen” were concentrated in the southern provinces of Kazakhstan and especially in cities like Turkestan and Zhambyl that contained “historical monuments of

²⁵ APRK f. 708, o. 5, d. 114, l. 235. Budyuk’s report did not elaborate on the supposed goals of these “pan-Islamist” conspirators.

²⁶ APRK f. 708, o. 5, d. 338, l. 40-42. August 30, 1941.

Islamism.”²⁷ According to Skvortsov’s report, an informant on Rubber State Farm #12 reported to the Kazakh NKVD that a hajji (identified as a Turk by nationality) expressed hope that Germany would quickly win the war and that Turkey, Iran, “Arabia,” and Afghanistan would unite into a single state.²⁸ Skvortsov also suggested that “anti-Soviet Muslims” in Kazakhstan were assisting “enemy states” by engaging in subversion and espionage, especially in locations where Party authorities had failed to conduct effective political work among Kazakhs and Uzbeks in their native languages.

The content of this report indicates that Skvortsov had a profoundly negative view of Islamic religious figures, at least during the summer of 1941. When Kazakh Party leaders discussed rumormongers like Stepanovna who did not belong to class categories like “kulak” or “bourgeois”, they tended to assess these cases on their own terms and did not see them as part of complicated or widespread conspiratorial schemes. When the rumormongers in question were Islamic religious figures, however, Skvortsov was more likely to characterize them as part of a vast anti-Soviet movement. After the establishment of SADUM and the cooptation of a substantial portion of Central Asia’s Islamic authorities in 1943, Party and NKVD officials in Kazakhstan were far more willing to work with mullahs in an effort to strengthen Soviet patriotism among the Muslim faithful (see pages 217-221). During the fall of 1941, however, these leaders were more apt to portray Muslim religious figures as members of a counterrevolutionary group intent on using rumors to sabotage labor mobilization in the republic.

²⁷ Skvortsov was probably referring to the mausoleum of Qozha Akhmet Iassauī kesenesī in Turkestan and the several mausoleums and mosques in Zhambyl (modern day Taraz). These structures are key historical monuments of Central Asia’s Islamic civilization and important sites of pilgrimage.

²⁸ APRK f. 708, o. 5, d. 338, l. 40-42.

The leaders of the Kazakh Communist Party continued to persecute these religious figures and portray them as saboteurs and disseminators of “panic-inducing rumors” into the fall of 1942. A key September directive sent by Skvortsov to all provincial and district Party committees in Kazakhstan claimed that because Party organs were failing to maintain vigilance and conduct agitprop “at the level demanded by the Party leadership,” “pro-fascist elements” were negatively influencing “honest” collective farmers by convincing them to shirk work and “plunder” food.²⁹ In Skvortsov’s estimation, these “elements” consisted largely of mullahs and other representatives of the “Muslim clergy.” Skvortsov characterized this food “hoarding” as the work of “anti-Soviet elements” who were attempting to “disrupt the supply of bread to the state” in order to facilitate a Nazi victory. According to Skvortsov, it was the responsibility of Party representatives to explain to “honest citizens” that any rumormongering or lack of discipline on collective farms helped the Nazi invaders and placed the perpetrators of these crimes in the camp of genuine counterrevolutionary elements. As intensely ideological as Skvortsov’s directive was, however, it did not directly conflate “anti-Soviet” behavior with an “anti-Soviet” identity. It is worth emphasizing that in Skvortsov’s formulation, most Slavs and Kazakhs who engaged in “hoarding” were honest Soviet citizens who inveterate “pro-fascist elements” had led astray.

Skvortsov’s directive implied that Kazakh and Slavic collective farmers were instinctively loyal towards Soviet authorities because of their class origins and that intensive propaganda work was sufficient to insulate these farmers from the “pro-fascist elements” who had been “activated” by the Nazi invasion. Skvortsov was once again portraying agitprop as a cure-all for one of the key problems undermining the labor mobilization campaign in the

²⁹ APRK f. 708, o. 6, d. 1418a, l. 28-32. September 10, 1942. See appendix.

republic's countryside (see Chapter Four). In this case, he was asserting that propaganda could protect Kazakhstan's collective farmers from nefarious anti-Soviet elements. Agitprop, however, was only one of the weapons in the arsenal of the Kazakh Communist Party and government. At the same time that Soviet officials in Almaty were attempting to shield the republic's collective farmers from the contaminating influence of "pro-fascist elements," these authorities were conducting a large-scale campaign to uncover and arrest any individuals or groups believed to be undermining the labor mobilization effort.

Kazakhstan's provincial Party officials intensified their campaign against rumormongers in response to Skvortsov's directives and established de facto quotas for arresting the disseminators of rumors. In September 1941, for instance, Secretary of the Guryev Provincial Party Committee Bekzhanov reprimanded local procuracy and NKVD officials for "weakly struggling against enemy elements disseminating false rumors."³⁰ Bekzhanov complained that after the Supreme Soviet criminalized the dissemination of rumors in July 1941, local officials had only uncovered 11 cases of rumormongering and had brought only three of these defendants to trial. To Bekzhanov's annoyance, one of these cases had been closed (presumably, because local investigators found the defendant innocent). Bekzhanov apparently believed that this tiny number of prosecutions could not possibly reflect the true extent of rumormongering in Guryev province, and evidently, he considered this phenomenon to be so pervasive that only mass repression could eliminate it. Bekzhanov concluded his reprimand to the province's local officials by ordering Provincial Procurator Tapalov and Provincial NKVD Head Goncharov to intensify the campaign against rumormongers and ensure that "not a single violator of the decree

³⁰ "Postanovlenie zasedaniia Biuro Gur'evskogo obkoma KP(b)K ot 23 sentiabria 1941 g.: O khode vypolneniia ukaza prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta SSR ot 6/VII ob otvestsvennosti za rasprotranenie v voennoe vremia lozhnykh slukhov, vzbuzhdaiushchikh trevogu sredi naseleniia," APRK f. 708, o. 5/1, d. 553, l. 42-43.

[against the disseminators of rumors]” escaped prosecution. Bekzhanov also ordered Chairman of the Guryev Provincial Procuracy Court El’shibaev to bring arrested defendants to trial no later than three days after their arrest. The Guryev Provincial Party Committee chairman, in line with the directives of the Kazakh Communist Party Central Committee, clearly intended to make the prosecution of rumormongering a permanent fixture of the province’s legal culture.³¹

Kazakh NKVD reports suggest that local industrial workers and collective farmers circulated rumors for the same reasons that people in other societies often spread rumors: to acquire information about current events that goes beyond the official narratives presented by the power elite, and to vent frustrations about unfair social and economic conditions.³² The resemblance of these “rumors” to objective reality inside Kazakhstan and the rest of the Soviet Union was often striking. For example, according to a June 1942 report from Head of the NKVD Organization of Qaraghanda Province Demidov to the Central Committee of the Kazakh Communist Party, an engineering-technical worker named Abzhan Shartambaev plausibly stated that Germany was winning the war against the Soviet Union because it enjoyed material superiority thanks to its previous conquests in Europe.³³ The same report highlighted an alleged statement made by Head of the Qarsaqpai Copper Smelting Factory N. S. Smirnov, who pointed out that the past slogans of “our boss” (i.e. Stalin) about the invincibility of the Red Army had turned out to be empty rhetoric. According to this Kazakh NKVD report, Smirnov allegedly complained that instead of boasting, Soviet leaders should have spent the prewar decade

³¹ Ibid.

³² Jayson Harsin, “The Rumour Bomb: Theorising the Convergence of New and Old Trends in Mediated US Politics” in Michael Ryan (ed.), *Cultural Studies: An Anthology* (London, 2008).

³³ “Spravka: o politnastroeniakh i antisovetskikh proiavleniakh sredi naseleniia,” June 9, 1942, APRK f. 708, o. 6, d. 205, l. 17-22.

constructing a mechanized army that could have protected the Soviet Union from the Nazi invasion.

The statements that Demidov attributed to Shartambaev and Smirnov were reasonable assumptions that the pair likely derived from official propaganda sources. Newspapers in Kazakhstan and other Soviet regions, after all, often described the Nazi invaders as a dangerous and formidable foe, and Soviet propagandists did not fully conceal the Red Army's large-scale retreats during the opening months of the war.³⁴ Demidov likely considered Shartambaev's statement worth reporting because it expressed ambiguity about the outcome of the war, which contradicted the Soviet leadership's official line that the Red Army would eventually overcome all setbacks and smash the fascist invader to pieces. In a similar vein, Smirnov's comment questioned Stalin's omniscience, which undoubtedly alarmed Kazakh Communist Party leaders because the "great leader" was an important topic of their propaganda.³⁵ The leaders of the Kazakh Communist Party and Kazakh NKVD were suspicious of all popular expressions that deviated from the official propaganda line, even if these deviations were minor. This fact suggests that these leaders greatly feared the creation of unofficial narratives about the Soviet war effort that they could not shape or control.

Demidov's *svodka* indicated that some collective farmers and workers in Kazakhstan, like Soviet citizens in many regions, were challenging the official agitprop narrative in ways that openly challenged the legitimacy of the Soviet war effort.³⁶ For example, this report also

³⁴ Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger*, 36-44.

³⁵ Gábor Rittersporn notes that Soviet authorities were particularly disturbed by public insults directed against Stalin because he was "the system's most publicized symbol" and they interpreted any criticism of him as an implicit expression of disloyalty towards the Soviet system as a whole. Rittersporn, "The Omnipresent Conspiracy," 113.

³⁶ For the ubiquity of these kinds of rumors in the wartime Soviet Union, see Krinko, "Neformal'naia kommunikatsiia v 'zakrytom' obshchestve.

discussed the case of a certain Fekla Suslova, a member of the Rebirth [*Vozrozhdenie*] Collective Farm who had two sons in the army. According to Demidov, Suslova allegedly told an informant that reports of Nazi atrocities in the occupied regions were little more than “nonsense” and “Bolshevik propaganda.” Another worker in the Samarkand Energy and Repair Settlement named Andrei Siabrenno apparently articulated a similar sentiment, claiming that many Soviet citizens had awaited the Nazis with open arms because Communist Party authorities had “squeezed them so badly” during the 1930s. Continuing his diatribe, Siabrenno allegedly contended that the Nazis were not persecuting and destroying everyone in the occupied regions, only those people that “hamper[ed] their designs [*kotorie im meshaut*].”³⁷ By disseminating these kinds of rumors, Suslova and Siabrenno were promoting a counter narrative that the Kazakh NKVD considered very dangerous. According to Suslova and Siabrenno, the Nazis were not engaged in a campaign of extermination as Soviet officials constantly claimed, and propagandistic descriptions of a large-scale partisan movement in the occupied territories were grossly exaggerated. In penning this report, Demidov likely feared that if collective farmers and industrial workers in Qaraghanda province came to believe this counter-narrative, they would not see the Nazis as a deadly threat to the independence of Kazakhstan and the rest of the Soviet Union and they would promptly lose their will to selflessly labor to support the war effort.

There is evidence that by the summer of 1942 at the latest, the enthusiasm of the republic’s workers and collective farmers was indeed flagging. The overall deterioration of living and working conditions in Kazakhstan’s cities and countryside seemed to have a particularly deleterious effect in this regard. Demidov’s June 1942 report to the Kazakh Communist Party Central Committee, for example, asserted that at least some residents of

³⁷ APRK f. 708, o. 6, d. 205, l. 21.

Qaraghanda province blamed Soviet authorities for the severe hunger afflicting the population. The engineering-technical worker Abzhan Shartambaev, for example, allegedly asserted that Party and government authorities (which he referred to simply as “they”) were imperiously requisitioning food and livestock under the guise of accepting voluntary donations.³⁸ Shartambaev believed these “contributions” to be anything but voluntary, and Kazakhstan’s inability to refuse them exposed the fiction of the territory’s status as an “independent Union republic.” According to another informant, a turner in the Balqash Copper Factory named Ivan Mikhailovich portrayed the food situation in even more desperate terms, asserting that the “workers of the Soviet Union” were starving and were consequently working “without enthusiasm” [*spustia rukava*].³⁹ Ivan warned that the time would soon come when “we will *also* riot and not go to work” (emphasis added), suggesting that disturbances had already begun in some locations inside Qaraghanda province.

By the summer of 1942, the struggle against rumormongering had become an integral component of the more general campaign against “anti-Soviet elements” in Kazakhstan. Workers and collective farmers in the republic most likely spread rumors in order to acquire an accurate picture of current events in Kazakhstan and the Soviet Union as a whole, but Kazakh NKVD and Kazakh Communist Party officials treated this practice as an attempt to create an anti-Soviet alternative to the worldview painstakingly constructed by Soviet propagandists. The intensity of the legal campaign against these “gossipers” suggests that Party and government authorities in Kazakhstan greatly feared that Soviet citizens were actively creating these alternative worldviews. The Soviet obsession with uncovering the disseminators of “false

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

rumors” was certainly not unique to Kazakhstan – NKVD and Procuracy officials in every Soviet region waged an analogous struggle against rumormongering in 1941-1942.⁴⁰ At the same time, many Kazakh NKVD and Kazakh Communist Party reports written in 1941-1942 did not describe rumormongering as the preserve of a specific “anti-Soviet” group. As the war continued, however, these officials increasingly associated “anti-Soviet” behaviors with clearly defined “anti-Soviet” groups, and in this way, they further refine the categories of repression in wartime Kazakhstan.

From Rumors to “Terrorism”: The (Re)emergence of the Fifth Column Narrative, 1942

The Kazakh NKVD moderated its mass terror campaign after Ezhov’s arrest in 1938, but the organization did not stop persecuting “anti-Soviet” groups or using these groups as a foil to explain economic and administrative failures in the republic. A typical August 1940 report from the Aqtöbe provincial NKVD organization to Second Secretary of the Kazakh Communist Party Zhūmabai Shayakhmetov claimed that “socially alien” elements were actively sabotaging the local bread harvest by “disrupting labor discipline and sowing panic” among collective farmers through “anti-Soviet agitation.” The report alleged that a group of individuals recently freed from custody, several of whom were “former *bais*,” arrived on the New Era [*Zhana-Dāuīr*] Collective Farm and rapidly asserted control over the farm’s administrative apparatus. These *bais* then manipulated the farm’s chairperson into pilfering food and transferring the produce to them. According to this report, as a direct result of these machinations the New Era farm “failed to

⁴⁰ For example, military tribunals and the NKVD waged an aggressive campaign against rumormongers in Sevastopol before it fell to the Nazis. See D. V. Omel’chuk, “Za rasprostranenie lozhnykh slukhov...”: Heizvestnyie stranitsy geroicheskoi oborony Sevastoplia: 1941-1942 gg,” *Uchebnaya zapiska Tavricheskogo natsional’nogo universiteta im. V. I. Vernadskogo*. Seriiia “Istoriia”, vol. 16 (55): (2003).

supply the mandated amount of bread to the state,” a failure which necessitated the intervention of the Kazakh NKVD to smash this illicit “anti-Soviet” network.

After the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, the Kazakh Communist Party and Kazakh NKVD began “uncovering” conspiracies that crossed the boundary from corruption and nepotism and entered the realm of terrorism. By early 1942, these officials were focusing more on these putative conspiracies than on rumors as the primary form of “anti-Soviet” behavior in Kazakhstan. In October 1941, for instance, the Head of the Political Section of the Turksīb Party cell reported to Zhūmabai Shayakhmetov that Party workers had discovered two “anti-Soviet leaflets” in the Aiagōz Station of East-Kazakhstan Province.⁴¹ These leaflets, supposedly produced by an organization calling itself the Committee for the Salvation of the Peoples, claimed that the “Stalinist government” had been “draining the blood” of the people of Aiagōz [*aiaguztsy*] for 23 years with agricultural taxes while exterminating them with hunger. The leaflets went on to state that Germany sought to bring “genuine happiness” to the Soviet Union and the people of Aiagōz should follow the example of the populations of “Kiev, Kharkov, Kuibyshev, Moscow, and Astrakhan,” perhaps by opposing Soviet power or even by collaborating with the Germans (the report is unclear on this point). The leaflets supposedly concluded by enjoining the people of Aiagōz to protest the war and “the murder of your sons and brothers” by killing the “communist frauds.”

As the war continued, Kazakh Communist Party and Kazakh NKVD officials claimed to uncover ever-greater numbers of “terrorist” conspiracies in the republic that involved attempts to kill Party-state officials and revolt against Soviet power. Reports produced by these officials in 1941 focused on either Muslim religious figures or “anti-Soviet” groups such as the Committee

⁴¹ APRK f. 708, o. 5, d. 114, l. 250-251. October 14, 1941. According to this report, the Political Section of the Turksīb Party cell forwarded these leaflets to the regional NKVD organization for a formal investigation.

for the Salvation of the Peoples that had no clear political or class affiliation. In 1942, these officials transitioned to a narrative of “anti-Soviet” behavior that focused more explicitly on “enemy” socioeconomic groups. The historian James Harris argues that during the late 1930s, Soviet Communist Party and NKVD authorities applied labels to the victims of repression that were intentionally vague. Because Soviet authorities never clearly defined what terms such as “enemy,” “wrecker,” and “counterrevolutionary” meant, they were able to apply these labels indiscriminately in accordance with their political objectives.⁴² In 1942, Kazakh NKVD officers resumed the practice of applying these labels to anyone they perceived was opposing the Soviet system or undermining the war effort. These officers were particularly quick to apply the label of “enemy” to individuals belonging to “defeated” socioeconomic and political groups.

In January 1942, for example, the Yrghyz District Party Committee in Aqmola province reported to Skvortsov that the region was “heavily polluted” [*sil’no zasoren*] with “*bais*, counterrevolutionaries, Alash-Orda nationalists, and bandit-insurgent elements” who had been waging an “active struggle against the [Soviet] structure [*stroï*]” since the October Revolution.⁴³ According to this report, these groups had survived the mass repressions of the late 1930s and had awaited the period of instability engendered by the Nazi invasion to sabotage the local economy and instigate uprisings amongst Slavic and Kazakh collective farmers.⁴⁴ The aggressive and threatening language used in this local Party report served to emphasize the contention that

⁴² Harris, *The Great Urals*, 170-171.

⁴³ APRK f. 708, o. 6/2, d. 117, l. 75-80. January 12, 1942.

⁴⁴ Peter Holquist argues that categories of Soviet repression during the 1930s were highly deterministic. According to Bolshevik ideology, a person’s sociological background was the single best predictor of future behavior and determined whether a person was loyal to the Soviet system. Soviet leaders did not always consider individuals with “anti-Soviet” sociological or political backgrounds to be irredeemable, but these officials often described these “elements” as pollutants or bacilli that stood in the way of the creation of a harmonious and aesthetically perfect sociopolitical body. Holquist, “State Violence as Technique: The Logic of Violence in Soviet Totalitarianism,” in Weiner, *Landscaping the Human Garden*, 19-45.

these groups posed a clear and present danger to the war effort and to Soviet power in the region. In essence, these groups constituted a fifth column that was working in consort with the advancing Nazi forces.

In early 1942, provincial Party organizations in Kazakhstan produced many other reports detailing the activities of “anti-Soviet” elements in the republic. The “enemy” groups elaborated in these reports differed from place to place, but the bureaucratic language used by provincial Party officials to describe these groups was so similar that it is likely that this discourse was derived from a central source – Kazakh Communist Party leaders in Almaty and ultimately, Soviet Communist Party leaders in Moscow. To provide another example of this kind of rhetoric, in early 1942 the North-Kazakhstan Provincial Party Committee promulgated a directive aimed at “liquidating” the “counterrevolutionary” activities of “people and groups who had risen against Soviet power and the Communist Party in the past” such as “[Soviet] Germans” and “criminal-bandit” elements.⁴⁵ According to Kazakhstan’s local Party committees, the anti-Soviet fifth column had a different national and sociological composition depending on the region in question, but in 1942, these regional Party officials were unanimous in asserting that the ranks of anti-Soviet “elements” were growing in alarming proportions and that these elements were intensifying their struggle against Soviet authorities.

It is entirely possible, if not likely, that local Party and NKVD officials in Kazakhstan exaggerated or even fabricated details about the anti-Soviet fifth column in order to convince Party and NKVD officials in Almaty to allocate funds and resources to the provinces in order to combat these “enemy elements.” In early 1942, the republic’s provincial Party committees and

⁴⁵ “Meropriiatiia: po likvidatsii mogushchikh vzniknut’ kontrrevoliutsionnykh massovykh proiavlenii v gorode i raionakh Severo-Kazakhstanskoi oblasti,” APRK f. 708, o. 6/2, d. 117, l. 62-63. This report does not specify a date of issue.

Kazakh NKVD organizations did in fact institute administrative changes to facilitate the struggle against this supposed fifth column. In February, for example, district Party and NKVD organizations in North-Kazakhstan province established joint committees charged with suppressing “counterrevolutionary unrest” [*kontrrevoliutsionnye vystuplenii*] instigated by “anti-Soviet” and “enemy” elements.⁴⁶ As part of this counterinsurgent strategy, these district committees conscripted 200 Party and Komsomol members and formed them into militarized companies tasked with suppressing uprisings. In addition, the Kazakh Communist Party ordered the formation of small paramilitary battalions in all district centers. These battalions consisted of thirty armed volunteers who supported Kazakh NKVD and military quick reaction forces in “liquidating” anti-Soviet uprisings led by “enemy elements” such as *bais* and mullahs.⁴⁷ The Kazakh Communist Party and Kazakh NKVD were clearly preparing for a war behind the frontlines against “anti-Soviet elements” and their accomplices. Although there is little evidence that Kazakhstan’s leaders employed these counter-insurgency forces against the republic’s population, the creation of these units speaks to the paranoid mindset of Party and NKVD leaders in Almaty and their belief that “anti-Soviet” forces were massing for a showdown with Soviet power.

A Return to “Normalcy”, 1943-1945

⁴⁶ “Plan: Meropriiatiu o mobilizatsionnoi gotovnosti raionnoi partiinoi organizatsii na sluchai poiavleniia v raione kontrrevoliutsionnykh vystuplenii i raznogo roda organizovannykh antisovetskikh volnenii so storony antisovetskogo i vrazheskogo elementa,” February 15, 1942. APRK f. 708, o. 6/2, d. 117, l. 72-74.

⁴⁷ APRK f. 708, o. 5, d. 348, l. 62-63, 67-69. In the fall of 1942, the Central Committee of the Kazakh Communist Party also ordered the formation of 16 destruction battalions in West-Kazakhstan Province with a total membership of 1,346 personnel. The Kazakh Communist Party ordered these battalions to guard key economic enterprises, destroy “enemy elements” engaging in sabotage, combat Nazi paratroopers and spies, and apprehend deserters. See Belan, *Na vsekh frontakh*, 57-58.

The struggle against the anti-Soviet “fifth column” continued to be an important subject of internal and inter-bureaucratic correspondence between the Kazakh Communist Party and Kazakh NKVD during the last several years of the war, but the language that these officials used to describe “anti-Soviet” behavior evinced noticeable changes in 1943. Reports produced in 1943 tended to stress covert forms of “sabotage” that did not involve threats of violence or terrorism but which more closely resembled acts of everyday corruption or incompetence. This shift in repressive focus was probably connected to the Nazi defeat at Stalingrad and the beginning of the Red Army’s counteroffensive in the southern Soviet Union in the spring of 1943. As soon as the grievously wounded Wehrmacht stopped posing a direct military threat to Kazakhstan, the leaders of the Kazakh Communist Party and Kazakh NKVD focused less attention on the putative “terrorist” and “insurgent” activities of enemy groups “activated” by the Nazi invasion.

Local Party and NKVD officials in Kazakhstan, however, did not stop blaming “anti-Soviet” groups for the plethora of administrative and economic problems bedeviling the republic’s economic enterprises. On the contrary, these officials explained the persistence of these problems by continuing to blame members of groups that had contested Soviet rule in Kazakhstan during the 1920s and 1930s. According to this narrative, the socioeconomic and political identities of these “anti-Soviet” individuals did not change after the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union – only the nature of their crimes did. In one particularly indicative case, Head of the NKVD Organization of South-Kazakhstan Province Bolodin sent a report to Chairman of the Provincial Soviet Ishanov indicating that representatives of these “enemy” groups were doing everything in their power to sabotage livestock raising on local farms by causing catastrophic

animal losses.⁴⁸ According to Bolodin's report, local Kazakh NKVD investigators discovered that Chairman of the Maidantep Collective Farm Seifull Khalmatov had invited a number of administrators and farmers to his apartment to discuss "provocational rumors" that Soviet officials had ordered the evacuation of Tashkent and that the Nazis had bombed Astrakhan. During this conversation, Khalmatov allegedly convinced a farm administrator to rustle collective livestock and illegally redistribute these animals to his cronies.

Based on the evidence in Bolodin's report, he could have easily depicted Khalmatov's crime as a simple act of corruption. Bolodin instead characterized Khalmatov as a conscious saboteur of Soviet power. In explaining the nature of Khalmatov's crime, Bolodin made sure to highlight the chairman's connection to "anti-Soviet" individuals. According to this report, all of Khalmatov's close relatives were former "Basmachi" or "dekulakized peasants," and in 1931, police had arrested Khalmatov himself for participating in a "bandit-insurgent movement."⁴⁹ By emphasizing Khalmatov's close connections to inveterate "anti-Soviet" groups, Bolodin was adhering carefully to a narrative of "anti-Soviet" behavior that had become integral to the thinking of Kazakh NKVD and Kazakh Communist Party officials by 1943. According to this narrative, the remnants of previously defeated groups like the Basmachi and kulaks still posed a threat to Soviet power in Kazakhstan, even though these groups now had to use clandestine tactics like economic sabotage since they would not be able to link up with Nazi forces to overthrow Soviet authorities by force of arms.

⁴⁸ "Dokladnaia zapiska o sostoianii zhivotnovodstva v kolkhozakh i sovkhozakh Iuzhno-Kazakhstanskoi oblasti." April 19, 1943. State Archive of South-Kazakh Province (GAUKO) f. 121, o. 6, d. 25, l. 19-29.

⁴⁹ Based on this report, it is possible that Khalmatov joined a group to escape from a collective farm or resist collectivization.

Bolodin's report used very similar language to explain the outbreak of a hoof-and-mouth epidemic among the cows of the Zhambyl Collective Farm.⁵⁰ According to Bolodin, the guilty parties were a veterinary doctor named Vinogradov who was a former administrative exile repressed for "counterrevolutionary activities," and the livestock specialist Abanin, who had previously served a five-year sentence for an unspecified crime. Bolodin accused the pair of ignoring the symptoms of infection among the cows on the collective farm and signing off on the transfer of the sick livestock to the local cattle collection point [*zagotskot*]. Because Vinogradov and Abanin failed to implement a quarantine to contain the disease, the hoof-and-mouth virus spread to the nearby Kyzyl-Abad Collective Farm. Bolodin's report also claimed that in an additional breach of protocol, Vinogradov and Abanin sent sixty-six pregnant cows to be slaughtered in the Tashkent Meat Combine even though many were infected with the virus.⁵¹ In Bolodin's estimation, the two collective farm officials had consciously attempted to damage livestock raising in South-Kazakhstan province through their "criminal" actions. Bolodin was essentially asserting that Vinogradov and Abanin were guilty by default because of their earlier conflicts with the Soviet regime. According to the Kazakh NKVD officer's description of the case, Vinogradov and Abanin had not simply been incompetent – they had intentionally sought to sabotage the economy and the war effort by spreading the hoof-and-mouth virus throughout Central Asia.⁵²

In a formulation that became ubiquitous in wartime Kazakhstan, Bolodin insisted that even the most mundane agricultural problems in the countryside were the results of clandestine acts of sabotage perpetrated by inveterate "anti-Soviet" individuals who had acquired a new

⁵⁰ GAUKO f. 121, o. 6, d. 25, l. 28-29.

⁵² Ibid.

lease on life after the Nazi invasion. This narrative conveniently justified the Kazakh NKVD's heavy-handed presence in the republic as well as the failures of local collective farm officials to deliver animal products to the state. Party and government officials in Kazakhstan's provinces had every reason to perpetuate this narrative because it deflected blame for administrative failures from them to defenseless scapegoats.⁵³ From 1943 to the end of the war, vested institutional interests and a strengthened ideological fixation with "anti-Soviet elements" sustained the narrative of a fifth column that was almost certainly fictitious. This close association between "anti-Soviet" activities and individuals with a suspect past was consistent with the logic of the Communist Party's wartime propaganda line. Kazakh Communist Party propagandists constantly asserted that the peoples of Kazakhstan were fully united in the struggle against the fascist enemy, but Party and NKVD officials in the republic needed some sort of explanation for the persistence of self-serving and neglectful practices in factories and on collective farms. In this context, it made perfect sense to focus on the supposedly contaminating influence of "activated enemy elements" who had never reconciled themselves to Soviet power and to attach sinister "anti-Soviet" motivations to the non-political crimes committed by these individuals.

Because historians have done so little research on Stalinist repression in Central Asia and the Soviet Union as a whole during the Great Patriotic War, it is difficult to state definitively whether the fifth column narrative was widespread outside Kazakhstan during this period. Fragmentary information, however, suggests that by the end of the war Party and NKVD officials in other Soviet regions were basing their repressive campaigns on similar kinds of

⁵³ This form of scapegoating was integral to the culture of the Soviet governing apparatus by the late 1930s. Local officials embraced the practice of scapegoating in order to avoid blame for manifest economy failures. Rittersporn, "The Omnipresent Conspiracy," 106.

narratives. For example, in May 1944 Secretary of the Tajik Communist Party Dmitrii Protopopov sent a classified telegram to Stalin and Malenkov confirming the existence of a “bourgeois-nationalist” group in Murgab district led by the chairman of the district soviet as well as émigrés based in Iran and China.⁵⁴ Before the NKGB arrested the 27 members of this group, they had supposedly been spreading “provocative rumors” concerning conscription into the Red Army and the lack of food supplies in the district.⁵⁵ By the end of the war, NKVD and Communist Party leaders in many Soviet regions were likely hunting for members of an ambiguously defined anti-Soviet fifth column. In this way, the NKVD and Communist Party brought wartime violence deep into the Soviet interior.

“The Most Dangerous Enemies of Soviet Power”: The Special-Settlers as Portrayed in NKVD *svodki*

Historians of the wartime deportations have paid relatively little attention to NKVD *svodki* about the German and North Caucasian special-settlers.⁵⁶ These surveillance reports are critical primary sources, however, because Soviet and Kazakh NKVD officers used them to

⁵⁴ “Shifrotelegramma Protopopova I. V. Stalinu, G. M. Malenkovu o “burzhuzno-natsionalisticheskoi gruppe” v Tadjikistane,” May 17, 1944. Archive of the President of the Russian Federation (APRF) f. 3, o. 58, d. 207, l. 191. In V. N. Khaustov et al., *Lubianka: Stalin i NKVD-NKGB-GUKR “Smersh”, 1939 – mart 1946* (Moscow, 2006), 426.

⁵⁵ In 1946, the case against this “nationalist” group in Murgab district was officially revealed to have been fabricated. *Ibid*, 576.

⁵⁶ F. L. Sinitsyn is one of the only historians who has discussed NKVD *svodki* about the deported populations in significant detail. See “Politicheskie nastroyeniia deportirovannykh narodov SSSR, 1939-1956 gg,” *Voprosy istorii*, no. 1: (January 2010), 50-70. His article describes a wide range of anti-Soviet attitudes among deportees in Kazakhstan, Siberia, and other regions of exile. The “anti-Soviet” expressions of these deportees ranged from statements of sympathy for the invading Nazi forces to plans to launch insurgencies against Soviet authorities. Sinitsyn maintains that the anti-Soviet sentiments described in these NKVD reports were genuine – according to him, the deportees identified in these reports really did wish for the Nazis to destroy Soviet power. According to Sinitsyn, the deportees were desperate for freedom and had little choice but to hope that the Nazis would liberate them from exile. In Sinitsyn’s estimation, the NKVD was engaged in the production of a self-fulfilling prophesy – these deportees were not anti-Soviet before their deportation, but many became so after they arrived in exile.

create a narrative of treason that provided ideological firmament to the special-settlement structure. This narrative was unique in the context of wartime repression inside Kazakhstan because it did not associate anti-Soviet attitudes and actions with specific socioeconomic or political groups as *svodki* about Kazakhs and Slavs did. Instead, these surveillance reports ascribed an anti-Soviet identity to the deported nationalities as a whole. Like the content of the NKVD interrogation reports analyzed by Hiroaki Kuromiya in his recent monograph, this narrative of treason had nothing to do with reality on the ground – NKVD officers distorted facts or created them wholesale to “prove” the validity of their accusations and justify their wanton abuses against the defenseless special-settlers.⁵⁷ The Soviet leadership used this narrative to rationalize the existence of the special-settlements and the regime of forced labor inside of them. Although this narrative was inflexible in its structure and content, it required constant reiteration and elaboration in order to survive. NKVD *svodki* about the deportees were the textual source for this reiteration and elaboration.

It is clear that Soviet and Kazakh NKVD officers recycled the content of their surveillance reports, most likely to exaggerate the extent of “anti-Soviet” sentiments and behaviors among the German and North Caucasian special-settlers. By the end of the war, the narrative of treason surrounding these deportees evinced several qualities of a micro-level authoritative discourse.⁵⁸ This discourse drew on a very limited number of epistemological sources – most prominently, the pronouncements of Soviet Communist Party and government

⁵⁷ Kuromiya, *The Voices of the Dead*.

⁵⁸ I use the term micro-level authoritative discourse to refer to a discourse prevalent in a single institution, in this case the NKVD. It is important to note, however, that the micro-level authoritative discourse developed by the NKVD to describe the deportees was clearly informed by macro-level Stalinist discourse, which was the entire rhetorical complex underpinning Soviet ideology during the 1940s and 1950s. For the concept of authoritative discourse in the Stalinist Soviet Union, see Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton, 2005), 1-33.

leaders concerning the Soviet Germans and North Caucasians. NKVD officers based this narrative on an internally reproduced lexicon closed to external inputs, and it had virtually nothing in common with objective reality. This closed narrative was the discursive complement to the repressive special commandant system that confined the deportees to the special-settlements and transformed them into objects of labor.

During the war, the all-Union and Kazakh security services were very interested in the “political attitudes” of the deportees. These organizations inserted a large number of spies and informants into the exile communities to uncover these attitudes. Informants accompanied the special-settlers from the moment they entered the freight wagons that took them into exile, and surveillance was an ever-present fact during their time in exile.⁵⁹ To provide just one example of the ubiquity of this surveillance regime, Head of the Secret-Political Section of the Qostanai Party organization Rupasov reported to Deputy Head of the Soviet NKVD Sergei Kruglov and Nikolai Bogdanov that from the winter of 1943 to July 1944, Soviet NKVD agents recruited 470 informants among the 45,000 Chechens and Ingush in the province.⁶⁰ In addition, the Soviet NKGB recruited 78 “agent-informants” during this period. If this data is accurate, 1.2% of Chechen and Ingush special-settlers in Qostanai Province were working for the Soviet NKVD or NKGB by July 1944. This proportion may seem low, but it is consistent with the ratio of informants inside other exile communities. The prominent Gulag specialist Viktor Zemskov estimates, for example, that 0.97% of kulak special-settlers in Kazakhstan worked as NKVD intelligence agents or informants in December 1944.⁶¹ The Soviet spy organizations lacked the

⁵⁹ For a mention of efforts to recruit informants among German special-settler en route to their places of exile, see GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 83, l. 177-184 in Kozlov, *Istoriia stalinskogo Gulaga*, vol. 5, 327.

⁶⁰ “Doklad ‘O trudovom ustroistve spetspereselentsev Severnogo Kavkaza rasselennykh v Kustanaiskoi oblasti i ikh agenturno-operativnom obsluzhivanii.’” July 15, 1944. GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 167, l. 311-319.

personnel to monitor Kazakhstan's German and North Caucasian deportees around the clock, but they still invested substantial resources into ascertaining the attitudes of these special-settlers. This was no doubt because state security officials considered the deportees to pose a serious threat to state security.

The Perpetual Traitors? Svodki about the Soviet Germans

In their wartime surveillance reports about the Germans special-settlers, Soviet and Kazakh NKVD officers constantly claimed that these deportees were planning to launch rebellions, cooperate with Axis forces, and launch armed attacks against Kazakhs, Russians, and other civilians residing near the special-settlements. Soviet NKVD officers often began their internal reports by perfunctorily stating that political attitudes among German deportees were “generally healthy.” However, in most of their reports these officers devoted considerable attention to the “anti-Soviet” activities of the Germans, so much so that the supposed anti-Soviet identity of these special-settlers greatly overshadowed positive statements about their “political attitudes.”

It is important to note that this narrative did not emerge during the war. When Hitler became German chancellor in 1933, the OGPU began accusing Soviet Germans of preparing “an insurrection as well as terrorist and diversionary acts” designed to facilitate a Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union.⁶² During the first two years of the Great Patriotic War, Soviet and Kazakh NKVD officers went to fantastic lengths to perpetuate and expand this narrative of treason. As

⁶¹ See Zemskov, “‘Kulatskaia ssylka’ nakanune i v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny,” *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia*, vol. 2: (1992), 3-26. Steven Barnes, in contrast, writes that 8% of inmates in the Soviet Union's corrective-labor camps were agents or informants in 1944. Barnes, “All for the Front, All for Victory,” 251. This discrepancy likely stemmed from the difficulty of recruiting informants in geographically dispersed special-settlements compared to corrective-labor camps.

⁶² Siegelbaum, *Broad is My Native Land*, 304.

early as November 1941, Director of the Special-Settlement Section of the Soviet NKVD Ivan Ivanov sent a notification [*orientirovka*] to NKVD officers throughout the Soviet Union warning that a number of “fully constituted counterrevolutionary organizations, groups, and individuals” existed among the German deportees.⁶³ According to Ivanov, these groups and individuals were engaged in “preparatory-insurgent, espionage, sabotage, and diversionary work” in anticipation of an “an internal war against Soviet power.” Ivanov went so far as to claim that “counterrevolutionary elements” among German deportees arriving in Omsk and North-Kazakhstan provinces were establishing ties with established German communities with the goal of organizing widespread “counterrevolutionary activities.” The overall thrust of Ivanov’s notification was clear: deportation had not eliminated the threat posed by the Soviet Germans, and they would continue to undermine Soviet power in exile because they were inveterate traitors.

Soviet and Kazakh NKVD officers helped solidify this narrative by portraying the seemingly loyal behavior of the German special-settlers as a scheme to undermine Soviet power in regions of exile. These officers often highlighted these machinations in the same reports that praised the work of German deportees on collective farms and in other enterprises. For example, a November 1941 report to Ivanov from Senior Operational Plenipotentiary of the Special-Resettlement Section of the Soviet NKVD Cherepanov described how deported Germans were using legitimate channels of complaint to mask their “anti-Soviet” intentions.⁶⁴ For example, an informant in Semei Province’s Kōkpektī district reported that the German special-settler Gerdt

⁶³ “Orientirovka O kontr-revolutsionnykh proiavleniakh sredi nemtsev-pereselentsev,” November 3, 1941. GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 84, l. 147-150. According to Ivanov, Soviet Germans had formed these counterrevolutionary groups in their home regions and had managed to maintain their existence in exile.

⁶⁴ “Dokladnaia zapiska O rezul’tatakh rasseleniia i trudoustroistva nemtsev-pereselentsev v Semipalatinskuu obl. Kazakhskoi SSR.” November 17, 1941. GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 84, l. 123-126.

was attempting to organize his fellow deportees to elect a representative to petition local Party and government authorities to improve living conditions in their special-settlement. Instead of devoting meaningful attention to this peaceful and legitimate organizational initiative, however, Cherepanov highlighted a threat allegedly made by Gerdt to “kill neighboring Poles and Russians without mercy.” Cherepanov’s report did not make an explicit link between Gerdt’s attempts to organize the German special-settlers and his alleged threats against Russians and Poles, but by implicitly linking these two activities, Cherepanov was suggesting that Gerdt and his seemingly harmless attempts to challenge the exile regime were part of an anti-Soviet conspiracy.⁶⁵ The narrative of treason surrounding the German special-settlers had few shades of grey. According to Soviet NKVD reports, the Germans were inherently and eternally hostile to the Soviet Union, and Soviet NKVD officers interpreted all the actions of these deportees through these paranoid lens.⁶⁶

The documentary record indicates that Kazakh NKVD officers were quick to adopt this narrative of treason from their superiors in the Soviet NKVD. A particularly revealing November 1941 report from Kazakh NKVD Head Aleksei Babkin to Ivanov maintained that the number of “active anti-Soviet elements” among the Soviet Germans had greatly increased thanks to deportation. According to Babkin, these “elements” were spreading “provocational rumors,”

⁶⁵ According to Gubrium and Holstein, narrators use linkage to establish context for understanding and characterizing isolated components of a story. See *Analyzing Narrative Reality*, 55. For example, crimes like murder are only considered wrong because narrators link these crimes with immoral motivations such as greed or envy. In the case of the German deportees, NKVD officers used linkage as a rhetorical device to sustain the narrative of treason.

⁶⁶ These themes were also pervasive in Soviet NKVD reports about German special-settlers in Siberia. See for example “Iz dokladnoi zapiski nachal’nika upravleniia NKVD Novosibirskoi oblasti M. F. Kovshuk-Bekmana i nachal’nika KRO UNKVD Shamarina nachal’niku Otdela spetsposelenii NKVD SSSR I. V. Ivanovu ob usilenii antisovetskikh nastroenii sredi nemtsev-pereselentsev,” December 31, 1941. In Kozlov, *Istoriia stalinskogo Gulaga*, vol. 5, 329-331.

were praising Germany and Hitler, and were calling for “active opposition” to the Soviet Union in the form of sabotage and “massacres” targeting local populations.⁶⁷ Some of Babkin’s accusations against the Soviet Germans were not altogether surprising. After all, during the war the Soviet and Kazakh NKVD organizations regularly accused Slavs and Kazakhs of committing sabotage and other similar crimes. The anti-Soviet actions of German special-settlers as depicted in NKVD reports, however, were usually far more violent and threatening than those made by non-Germans. For example, according to Babkin’s report, a German deportee in North-Kazakhstan province named Gelbikh allegedly told his fellow Germans to “behave” so that Soviet authorities (referred to simply as “they”) would not starve them to death. Babkin went on to claim that Gelbikh allegedly told other special-settlers to preserve their strength because a battle between the German exiles and Soviet authorities was “inevitable.”

According to Babkin’s description of this case, Gelbikh’s statement was not rooted in genuine fear or desperation – it was part of a nefarious anti-Soviet conspiracy. By focusing so much attention on Gelbikh’s prediction that an armed conflict was brewing between local Soviet authorities and the German deportees, Babkin delegitimized the special-settler’s very real concerns about starvation and even worse, twisted these concerns to make them conform to the narrative of treason surrounding the Soviet German population. In this formulation, the deported Germans were not people struggling to survive the brutal conditions of exile – they were traitors plotting against the Soviet Union.

⁶⁷ GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 84, l. 75-84, November 4, 1941. For example, the German deportee Fladung supposedly told an informant in Semei Province’s Zharma District that the special-settlers were “idiots” for allowing the NKVD to deport them and they “must rise up like in 1918 and destroy Soviet power.” Similarly, while en route to Shar District in Semei Province an informant claimed that the German Ditlet wanted to beat Soviet authorities, “sparing neither children nor mothers”. In another case, the German Vladimir Shifer allegedly threatened to use sticks to beat the wives of Russian soldiers in East-Kazakhstan Province’s Kirov District.

By the end of 1941, Soviet and Kazakh NKVD officers were being even more explicit about the “fascist” proclivities of the German special-settlers and their supposed allegiance to the Third Reich. In December, Ivanov sent a paranoia-infused “special message” to Deputy Soviet NKVD Commissars Vsevolod Merkulov and Vasilii Chernyshev alerting the pair that “every possibility” existed that “fascist-counterrevolutionary elements” among deported Germans were establishing “counterrevolutionary networks” throughout the Soviet Union in order to conduct “subversive” [*podryvnie*] activities.⁶⁸ Ivanov’s assertion that “fascist-counterrevolutionary elements” infested the arriving German deportee populations was an important component of the rapidly congealing narrative of treason. Soviet and Kazakh NKVD officers never attached the fascist label to Kazakhs or Russians in their surveillance reports. The most threatening term they used to describe “enemy elements” within these groups was “pro-fascist.” The rhetorical distinction between “fascists” and “pro-fascists” in these *svodki* was subtle but important. During the war, propagandists working for the Soviet and Kazakh Communist Parties described fascism as the antithesis of everything Soviet and as an ideological disease that could infect people outside the Soviet Union, but which Soviet peoples were immune to.⁶⁹ According to these propagandists, fascist ideology could tempt Kazakhs and Russians and muddle their patriotic sentiments, but these people could never become fascists because they were “socialist peoples.”⁷⁰

⁶⁸ “Spetssoobshenie o khode rasseleniia nemtsev-pereselentsev,” December 2, 1941. GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 83, l. 191-194.

⁶⁹ At the 1943 Meeting of the Peoples of Central Asia held under the auspices of the Soviet Communist Party in Tashkent, several of the speakers described fascism as the antithesis of Soviet socialism. For example, the famed Kazakh geologist Qanysh Sätbaev referred to the Great Patriotic War as a conflict between “two diametrically opposed forces” consisting of the “freedom-loving peoples of the world” who promoted “freedom, progress, and civilization” on one side and the “dark forces of reactionary fascism” on the other who were attempting to enslave the world. APRK f. 708, o. 7/1, d. 666, l. 84-88.

⁷⁰ For an example of this ideological position, see “Fashizm – lutyi vrag chelovechestva,” *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*, June 28, 1941, 2.

By insisting that the exiled German communities were “infested” with fascists, Ivanov was strongly implying that an alien ideology had corrupted the Soviet Germans and transformed them into a non-Soviet people that was little different from the Nazi enemy.

In 1942, Soviet and Kazakh NKVD officers began to make concrete connections between the “fascist” attitudes of the German special-settlers and their putative plans to assist Axis forces by launching armed attacks against Soviet officials and civilians. The worsening situation on the frontlines almost certainly influenced this particular elaboration of the narrative of treason. As Wehrmacht Army Group South advanced towards Kazakhstan, the Soviet and Kazakh NKVD organizations became increasingly shrill about the supposed threat that the German special-settlers posed to internal security. According to a typical *svodka* sent from Ivanov to Cherepanov in January 1942, a German deportee in Pavlodar province named Klesler told an informant that if he could find an organization dedicated to opposing Soviet power, he would join it “and enter on the path to freedom from the Bolsheviks.”⁷¹ According to this surveillance report, Klesler’s “anti-Soviet” activities were not limited to mere talk. According to an informant, before his arrest the special-settler had attempted to gather 40-50 likeminded deportees in Pavlodar province with the goal of “overturning everything” and liberating the exiled Germans. Cherepanov was once again asserting that the German special-settlers were part of an anti-Soviet fifth column. However, whereas Kazakh NKVD officers were careful to associate this fifth column with Kazakhs and Slavs who belonged to “inveterate anti-Soviet groups,” Soviet and Kazakh NKVD officials grew more assertive in painting the entire deported German population with the brush of treason as the war continued.

⁷¹ “Dokladnaia zapiska O resul’tatakh rasseleniia i trudoustroistva nemtsev-pereselentsev v Pavlodarskoi obl. Kazakhskoi SSR,” January 24, 1942. GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 85, l. 188-194. According to Cherepanov, another special-settler named Oberlender expressed regret that the Germans had failed to launch an uprising in order to avoid deportation.

A slew of Soviet NKVD reports from early 1942 perpetuated the notion that the German special-settlers were treasonous. In a typical January report to Ivanov, Operational Plenipotentiary of the Soviet NKVD Special-Settlement Section Marti'anov summarized the reports of several informants living among German deportees in North-Kazakhstan province.⁷² Marti'anov concluded that the "political attitudes" of these special-settlers were mostly anti-Soviet because so many were "speaking out against the policies of Soviet power" [*imeetsia mnogo vyskazyvanii protiv meropriiatii Sovetskoi vlasti*]. One German deportee named Ivan Merker, for example, allegedly asserted that he was "awaiting Hitler every day because he is a thousand times better than the Soviet Union." Merker also supposedly claimed that everything Soviet newspapers wrote about the Nazi leader was false. Marti'anov's report highlighted many other cases of German special-settlers expressing sympathy for the Nazis. His *svodka* implied quite clearly that North-Kazakhstan's German deportees identified more strongly with the Nazis than with the Soviet Motherland. To highlight their perverted loyalty, Marti'anov asserted that these special-settlers were actively engaging in "counterrevolutionary activities" such as breaking threshing machines to disrupt local agriculture. According to his report, the North-Kazakhstan provincial NKVD organization arrested 39 German special-settlers from October to December 1941 for perpetrating these kinds of "counterrevolutionary" crimes.

It is important to note that although Soviet and Kazakh NKVD officers contextualized the narrative of treason surrounding the German special-settlers by linking it to the Nazi military threat, this narrative persisted even after the Nazi defeat at Stalingrad in February 1943 and the Wehrmacht's retreat into Eastern Europe and Germany in 1944-1945. In December 1944, for instance, Deputy Head of the Kazakh NKVD Petr Nikolaev reported to Head of the Special-

⁷² "Dokladnaia zapiska O proverke rasseleniia i trudovogo ustroistva spetspereselentsev-nemtsev v Severo-Kazakhstanskoi oblasti Po sostoianiu na 6/1-1942 goda," GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 85, l. 180-186.

Settlement Section of the Soviet NKVD Fedor Kuznetsov that local agents had recently uncovered “only” 123 “enemy” Germans in Kazakhstan who were perpetrating “anti-Soviet” crimes such as rumormongering, economic sabotage, and terrorism.⁷³ Nikolaev maintained that these German special-settlers posed “a clear threat” to the “Soviet system” in Kazakhstan, but it is notable that these “anti-Soviet” deportees constituted only a tiny proportion of the approximately 444,000 German special-settlers in the republic at this time.⁷⁴ This detail, however, did not seem to be particularly relevant to Nikolaev. By 1944 at the latest, Kazakh and Soviet NKVD officers concretized a rigid narrative of treason surrounding the Soviet Germans that was replete with “fascist” and “anti-Soviet” figures. The fact that police were arresting a small number of German deportees for committing “anti-Soviet” crimes by the end of the war did not reduce the intensity or ubiquity of this narrative within the Kazakh NKVD apparatus. By persistently conveying the notion to Soviet NKVD leaders that the German special-settlers were disloyal, Kazakh NKVD officers perpetuated a narrative of treason that legitimized the confinement of these deportees to the special-settlements and their relegation to forced labor.

“Insurgents”: Svodki about the *North Caucasians*

Like internal Kazakh and Soviet NKVD reports about the German special-settlers, *svodki* about the Balkar, Chechen, Ingush, and Karachay deportees constantly highlighted their “anti-Soviet” attitudes and their supposed intentions to undermine Soviet authority in Kazakhstan and

⁷³ “Dokladnaia zapiska ob agenturno-operativnoi rabote sredi spetspereselentsev nemtsev, rasselennykh na territorii Kazakhkoi SSR. Po sostoianiu na 1 dekabria 1944 goda.” GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 175, l. 259-275. Many of these rumors were similar to the misinformation that people throughout the Soviet Union were disseminating at this time. For example, a German in Semei Province named Batgauzer supposedly told an informant that the Red Army did not have the military capacity to seize Berlin. In Aqmola Province, the special-settler Bergardt allegedly claimed that after the war, “England and America” would support the Soviet population in instituting a non-Soviet government.

⁷⁴ For the population figure, see Bugai, *L. Beria – I. Stalinu: ‘Soglasno Vashemu ukazaniiu’*, 42.

the Soviet Union as a whole. These reports were the building blocks of another narrative of treason that existed parallel to the one surrounding the Soviet Germans. The basic goal informing both narratives was the same – to objectify the special-settlers by branding them as traitors. Indeed, in their *svodki* about the North Caucasian exiles, Soviet and Kazakh NKVD officers recycled most of the essential themes they used to describe the Germans deportees. By the end of the war, these NKVD officers created a closed discursive space that forcefully attached an “anti-Soviet” identity to the North Caucasian deportees, thus making their rehabilitation politically impossible.

Because so many Balkars and Karachays lived under Nazi occupation in 1942-1943, Soviet and Kazakh NKVD officers were quick to highlight concrete cases of collaboration in the months after these North Caucasians arrived in exile. For instance, according to a typical report sent to Beria from his deputy Vasilii Chernyshev in the winter of 1943, there were a number of “German accomplices” [*posobniki*] among Karachays deported to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.⁷⁵ One of these “accomplices” was a man named Mukhamedov who lived in an unspecified province. According to Chernyshev, Mukhamedov allegedly told an informant that the Karachays had “lived well” under the Nazis and had willingly established a gold fund to assist the German war effort. Another case involved the deported Karachay Ermishkin, a “former kulak” who supposedly told an informant that the NKVD deported the Karachays in order “to free up the rich North Caucasian land for the Jews.” By highlighting these “widespread” sentiments, Chernyshev was strongly implying that the Karachays were more loyal to the Nazis than to the Soviet Union. The fact that the Red Army had recently smashed the Nazis at Kursk and destroyed the offensive capacity of the Wehrmacht did not seem to influence Chernyshev’s

⁷⁵ “Svodka #4,” December 1943. GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 160, l. 118-122.

characterization of the Karachays at all.⁷⁶ From his perspective, the Nazi occupation had irrevocably contaminated the Karachays and transformed them into an “anti-Soviet population.”

When Chechen and Ingush deportees began arriving in Kazakhstan several months later, NKVD officers described them using language strikingly similar to the language they employed to denigrate the Karachays. Kazakh NKVD *svodki* produced in the spring of 1944 persistently asserted that Chechen and Ingush deportees constituted a very real threat to state security. According to an indicative March 1944 report written by Bogdanov for the benefit of Chernyshev, “anti-Soviet and bandit elements” embedded inside the Chechen and Ingush populations began terrorizing local populations and local collective farm directors almost immediately after arriving in exile.⁷⁷ Most of the cases described by Bogdanov revolved around conflicts over scarce food supplies. For example, on the New Ek [*Zhana Ek*] collective farm in Pavlodar province, the Ingush settler Akhil’chev allegedly gathered a group of 40 Chechens to demand increased food rations from the collective farm chairman. When the chairman refused to allocate these rations, Akhil’chev “initiated a brawl” during which the Chechens strangled the collective farm director.

According to Bogdanov, Chechen and Ingush special-settlers were making “violent threats” and engaging in riotous behavior throughout Aqmola, Aqtöbe, Kzyl-Orda, and other provinces, and many of these deportees were freely expressing their “bandit-criminal intentions” by threatening to seize livestock from collective farmers if local government authorities refused to give them more food.⁷⁸ In his report to Chernyshev, Bogdanov made it clear that the food

⁷⁶ For the significance of the Battle of Kursk, see Glantz, *When Titans Clashed*, 160-176.

⁷⁷ “Dokladnaia zapiska ob otnoshenii naseleniia Kazakhskoi SSR k spetspereselentsam Severnogo Kavkaza i nachavshimsia sredi nikh ob” aktivlenii antisovetskikh i banditskikh elementov. Po dannym na 25 Marta 1944 goda.” GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 183, l. 1-4.

supplies of many Chechen and Ingush special-settler families were so low that they would soon be “in a precarious situation”—a glib description for the onset of starvation.⁷⁹ It is thus reasonable to surmise that many Chechens and Ingush were resorting to “banditry” and other crimes because local officials were failing to supply them with enough food to survive. By referring to these activities as “bandit-criminal” behavior, Bogdanov was deflecting attention away from the very real desperation that drove these Chechen and Ingush deportees to steal while simultaneously providing credence to the official view that they were dangerous and anti-Soviet.

Since the Russian Civil War, Bolshevik authorities commonly used the bandit label to delegitimize groups and individuals unwilling to submit to Soviet authority.⁸⁰ According to this narrative, bandit groups were anti-Soviet by definition because they allowed themselves to be “used by [external] enemies to undermine the civil and military policies of the Soviet government and disorganize the Soviet home front.”⁸¹ Bogdanov used the same basic narrative to criticize the Chechens and Ingush. According to his report to Chernyshev cited above, many of the Chechen and Ingush special-settlers were “clearly manifesting insurgent attitudes oriented towards the reactionary policies of the Turkish government and the desire to go abroad illegally.”⁸²

⁷⁸ For example, in Aqmola Province’s Zatabol’skii District, the special-settler Shashev allegedly attempted to beat a nurse after she refused to provide him with medication.

⁷⁹ Ibid. Since the late 1930s, Soviet police prosecuted “theft of socialist property” as a counterrevolutionary crime. Rittersporn, “The Omnipresent Conspiracy,” 112-113.

⁸⁰ Bolshevik authorities constantly used the bandit label to describe Green and anarchist groups in particular. Siegelbaum, *Broad is My Native Land*, 201.

⁸¹ N. E. Kakurin and I. I. Vatsetis, *Grazhdanskaia voina, 1918-1920* (St. Petersburg, 2004), 71-85.

⁸² GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 183, l. 3.

Bogdanov maintained that this “counterrevolutionary” sentiment was so widespread that even former members of the Party-state apparatus in the Chechen-Ingush ASSR were engaging in “anti-Soviet activities.” For example, according to one informant, a former NKVD agent from the Chechen-Ingush ASSR named Khalit Khabaev said that after seeing what conditions were like in Kazakhstan, he would escape abroad with his family, most likely to Turkey.⁸³ In another case, a former procurator from the Chechen-Ingush ASSR allegedly told a Kazakh NKVD agent that the “Caucasians” launched a “large-scale” uprising when they were deported. Continuing, this procurator supposedly claimed that the Chechens and Ingush were covertly continuing this uprising in exile, which had become part of a “second front” aimed at “toppling Soviet power” in cooperation with the Turks.⁸⁴ With this report, Bogdanov was helping to consolidate the narrative of treason that the NKVD constructed for the North Caucasian special-settlers, the only difference being that he was now associating the treasonous intentions of these deportees with Turkey instead of Germany.

Soviet and Kazakh NKVD officers maintained complete fidelity to the narrative of treason surrounding the North Caucasian special-settlers throughout the spring of 1944. In April 1944, the Soviet NKVD deployed a plenipotentiary officer named Korneichuk to Qaraghanda province to investigate the resettlement of North Caucasian deportees in the region. In his

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid. There is little evidence that Turkey, which assumed a cautiously pro-Allied position during the war, planned to attack the Soviet Union after 1945. Vadim Tutunnik, “Turki iz Meskhetii: Vchera i sevodnia,” in Alieva, *Tak eto bylo*, vol. 3, 145-163. However, there is convincing evidence that in late 1945 and early 1946 Stalin planned to annex several territories in eastern Turkey and attach them to the Armenian SSR. According to the historian Vladislav Zubok, this plan was part of Stalin’s strategy for seizing control of the Turkish straights and transforming the Soviet Union into a Mediterranean Power. Vladislav M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Khrushchev* (Chapel Hill, 2007), 36-40. It is entirely possible that Stalin began hatching these plans in 1943-1944 and he feared that the Balkars, Chechens, Ingush, and Karachay would support Turkey in the event that the Turks launched a preemptive or retaliatory invasion of the Caucasus.

subsequent report to Gulag Head Viktor Nasedkin, Korneichuk maintained that “defeatist and clearly pro-fascist attitudes” were rampant among the North Caucasian special-settlers.⁸⁵

According to Korneichuk, many Chechens were agitating for a Nazi victory, which they apparently believed would allow them to return to Chechnya.⁸⁶ Korneichuk highlighted the case of the Chechen exile Khalit Khabaev, the same former NKVD agent discussed by Bogdanov in his March 1944 report to Chernyshev.⁸⁷ Korneichuk reported that Khabaev was telling anyone who would listen that he desired to escape the Soviet Union with his family because living conditions in Kazakhstan were so poor.

It is curious that as late as March 1944, NKVD officers like Korneichuk were continuing to insist that the North Caucasian special-settlers were pinning their hopes for liberation on Nazi Germany. After all, the Red Army was well on its way to forcing the Wehrmacht out of Soviet territory by this time, and a Soviet invasion of Germany was in the offing.⁸⁸ Total Soviet victory was practically inevitable, and only the most uninformed special-settler could have seriously believed that the Nazis could provide the North Caucasian deportees with assistance of any kind. Perhaps this is why NKVD *svodki* written in the spring of 1944 constantly reiterated the assertion that the North Caucasian special-settlers identified closely with Turkey and saw the Turks as potential saviors. When it came to the Kazakh population, wartime surveillance reports produced by Kazakh NKVD officers only associated pro-Turkish sentiments with “anti-Soviet”

⁸⁵ “Dokladnaia zapiska o prodelannoi rabote po priemu, razmeshcheniu i trudoustroistvu spetskontigenta po Karagandinskoi oblasti.” April 19, 1944. GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 167, l. 231-236.

⁸⁶ For example, the special-settler Akhmat Magamadov supposedly claimed that “It would be good if the Germans destroy the Soviet Union” because then the Chechens would be able to return to their homeland.

⁸⁷ Korneichuk refers to this Chechen as Khamit Khabaev rather than Khalit Khabaev. Korneichuk’s summary of the case is so similar to the description provided by Bogdanov that it is obvious they were referring to the same person.

⁸⁸ Glantz, *When Titans Clashed*, 184-215.

mullahs. *Svodki* about the North Caucasian deportees, in contrast, explicitly linked these sentiments to these populations as a whole, and especially to the Chechens and Ingush.

An April 1944 report from Bogdanov to Chernyshev about the settlement of North Caucasian deportees in Qaraghanda province provides a particularly revealing window onto the continued elaboration of the narrative of treason and its connection to the “Turkish threat.”⁸⁹ In his report, Bogdanov claimed that Chechen and Ingush special-settlers were “disseminating rumors” to the effect that the Turkish government had issued an ultimatum to Moscow and threatened to declare war against the Soviet Union if the Soviet government did not return the North Caucasians to their homeland post haste. Hearing this rumor, a group of Chechen and Ingush deportees allegedly held a public prayer requesting “long life for the Turkish government as the harbinger of their liberation.”

According to this *svodka*, these pro-Turkish gatherings coincided with an overall intensification of “counterrevolutionary, terrorist, and insurgent activities” among North Caucasians in the province. For example, according to an informant, a certain Khurtinen Karachaev, an exile on the Will of the Steppe [*Stepnaia Volia*] Collective Farm in Aqmola province, claimed that because the Ingush were “a brother people,” the Karachays would join them in an uprising and the entire North Caucasian population would “rise up, knives and scythes in hand.” Bogdanov also mentioned the case of the Chechen Sulteabek Akhmaev, a special-settler living on the Second Five-Year Plan Collective Farm in Semei province.

According to another informant, Akhmaev ominously stated that “after a maximum of one

⁸⁹ “Spetssoobshchenie o nastroeniakh i povedeni spetspereselentsev Severnogo Kavkaza – chechentsev, ingushev, balkartsev. Na 10-aprelia 1944 goda,” GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 183, l. 239-243. April 12, 1944. Robert Conquest plausibly argues that by 1944 Soviet leaders anticipated a military conflict with Turkey and feared that North Caucasian nationalities with a dubious sense of loyalty to the Soviet Union would cooperate with Turkish forces. See Conquest, *The Nation Killers*, 49.

month” the Chechens would launch an uprising and force their way back to the Caucasus, killing any Soviet officials they encountered along the way.⁹⁰

The primary message that Bogdanov was conveying to Chernyshev was clear – the North Caucasian special-settlers continued to pose a potent threat to internal security. By confining the Balkars, Chechens, Ingush, and Karachays to special-settlements located far away from the Caucasus and the Turkish border, the NKVD had made it virtually impossible for these groups to collaborate with Turkish forces in the event of a Soviet-Turkish war. This reality, however, did not prompt Bogdanov to tone down the accusatory tenor of his reports. On the contrary, as the war entered its final year, Bogdanov actually intensified his efforts to portray the North Caucasian deportees as a pro-Turkish fifth column. In essence, Bogdanov was portraying these special-settlers as peoples forever tainted by their contact with the Nazi occupiers. According to the narrative of treason he helped construct, the North Caucasian exiles carried the anti-Soviet germ deep within themselves, and for this reason it was only a matter of time until they struck at Soviet authorities using the standard repertoire of “counterrevolutionary” strategies – rumormongering, sabotage, terrorism, and if possible, collaboration with an invading power.⁹¹ According to this narrative, the North Caucasian deportees needed to be isolated deep inside the Soviet interior because of their treasonous natures, meaning that the special-settlement regime would have to remain a permanent fixture of Kazakhstan’s political and social structure.

Reports written by Kazakh NKVD officers in 1944 and sent to the NKVD leadership in Moscow sometimes expressed concerns that the North Caucasian special-settlers were contaminating Kazakhs with their “anti-Soviet” attitudes and that a shared Islamic faith was

⁹⁰ GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 183, l. 239-243.

⁹¹ For the concept of irredemiability in Soviet discourse, see Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, 149-154; Igal Halfin, *Intimate Enemies: Demonizing the Bolshevik Opposition, 1918-1928* (Pittsburgh, 2007).

facilitating illicit interactions between the two populations. One report to Beria from an unidentified Kazakh NKVD officer warned that Karachay exiles in South-Kazakhstan province were performing “Islamic rituals” with their Kazakh neighbors (namely building a large fire and performing a “Muslim dance”), and Kazakhs were visiting “Karachay elders” to hear readings from the Koran.⁹² According to this Kazakh NKVD officer, it was entirely possible that these Karachay elders were spreading their “treasonous” attitudes to these Kazakhs. If there is any validity to this *svodka* at all, it is likely that these Karachays were engaging in the same religious customs they had practiced in the North Caucasus and they were attempting to reproduce a fragment of the lives stolen from them by the NKVD. These special-settlers likely received solace from having some religious commonalities with their new Kazakh neighbors in a territory that was otherwise completely alien. For the Kazakh NKVD, however, even this most instinctually human of behaviors had sinister connotations. According to this Kazakh NKVD officer, this kind of interaction between Karachays and Kazakhs necessitated increased surveillance [*agenturno-operativnaia rabota*] to prevent these special-settlers from turning the loyal Kazakhs into an “anti-Soviet” population.

During the spring of 1944, the leaders of the Soviet NKVD demonstrated an even greater concern with suppressing the “treasonous” activities of the North Caucasian special-settlers than the Kazakh NKVD. In May, Beria sent a biting telegram to Bogdanov and Head of the Kyrgyz NKVD Pchelkin reprimanding them for not doing enough to suppress “enemy elements” operating amongst the North Caucasian special-settlers.⁹³ Beria reminded Bogdanov and Pchelkin that when local NKVD officers arrested North Caucasian exiles for “anti-Soviet

⁹² “Svodka #2 o nastroeniakh v sviazi s pereseleniem karachaevtsev.” Year of publication was probably 1944 based on the dates of the other reports in this *delo*. GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 160, l. 108-110.

⁹³ GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 168, l. 4. May 1944.

agitation, banditry, hooliganism, livestock theft, preparing to escape from the special-settlements, and work refusal” they were supposed to send these cases to the Special Council [*Osoboe soveshchanie*] of the Soviet NKVD for review.⁹⁴ Beria intended to show little mercy towards North Caucasian deportees accused of violating Soviet law, and he wished for NKVD officers in Moscow to have the ultimate say over their punishment. What is more, his telegram repeated the now typical refrain of equating apolitical offenses such as escape and theft with “counterrevolutionary” crimes such as “anti-Soviet agitation.” By the beginning of 1945, the narrative of treason surrounding the North Caucasian deportees had become an important part of the institutional culture of the Soviet and Kazakh NKVD organizations. The persistence of this narrative made the idea of genuinely integrating the North Caucasians into Kazakhstan’s society politically untenable, if not impossible. In this way, the NKVD organizations rationalized the existence of a special-settlement network that supplied them with vast numbers of forced laborers and that also justified their role as the final line of defense against the republic’s “anti-Soviet” populations.

Conclusion

During the Great Patriotic War, the Soviet and Kazakh NKVD organizations constructed several complementary narratives that described the activation of fifth columns inside Kazakhstan dedicated to undermining the war effort and Soviet power itself. The basic contours of these narratives emerged during the 1930s, but the Nazi invasion of June 1941 accelerated the

⁹⁴ This report does not indicate when the Soviet NKVD assumed initial oversight over criminal cases concerning North Caucasian deportees. The NKVD Special Council was a powerful organ established by the Soviet Sovnarkom alongside the NKVD in 1934. The Special Council could sentence “socially-dangerous” individuals to execution and imprisonment without trial. “Postanovlenie TsIK i SNK SSSR ‘Ob Osobom Soveshchanii pri NKVD SSSR’,” November 5, 1934. “Arkhiv Aleksandra N. Iakovleva,” <http://www.alexanderyakovlev.org/almanah/inside/almanah-doc/1009095>. Last accessed March 31, 2015.

NKVD's ideological and repressive campaign against the republic's "internal enemies." This terror campaign struck all of Kazakhstan's major national and social groups, but Soviet and Kazakh NKVD officers pursued different repressive policies depending on the nationality of their victims. In the case of Kazakhs and Slavs, the "internal enemy" tended to take a sociological form. Unable to explain why so many Slavs and Kazakhs were behaving in a less than patriotic manner, these officers resuscitated the image of the inveterate "anti-Soviet" element who was opposed to Soviet power because of his or her "counterrevolutionary" background as a mullah, "Basmachi," or Alash Orda nationalist.

In many respects, NKVD descriptions of the "anti-Soviet" activities of Slavic and Kazakh "counterrevolutionary elements" were similar to characterizations of the German and North Caucasian deportees, but there were key differences between the two narratives. Most notably, surveillance reports about the deportees rarely differentiated their subjects by class, political affiliation, or personal history. In their *svodki*, Kazakh and Soviet NKVD officers constantly implied that these nationalities were guilty in toto for harboring "anti-Soviet" and "treasonous" intentions. As the Nazi threat to Kazakhstan and the rest of the Soviet Union diminished from 1943 to 1945, these officers focused less and less on persecuting "anti-Soviet elements" among Kazakhs and Slavs, but these same NKVD officers continued to assert that the German and North Caucasian special-settlers constituted a potent threat to state security. By the end of the war, the narrative of special-settler treason had become so entrenched in the institutional culture of the Soviet Union that Party and government authorities could only dislodge it after applying fundamental changes to the Soviet system as a whole. This institutionalization of the narrative of treason during the war helps explain why the Soviet

leadership began abolishing the special-settlement system only after the onset of de-Stalinization in 1954.⁹⁵

In his compelling article about Japanese-Americans interned by the U.S. Army during World War II, the communications scholar Gordon Nakagawa argues that confinement in camps, invasive searches, and constant surveillance transformed the internees into “object[s] of knowledge.”⁹⁶ By referring to these prisoners as “objects,” Nakagawa means that they became docile, unidimensional, and voiceless caricatures of themselves, both from their own perspective and from that of U.S. military officials. This docility gave military officials the complete freedom to shape the narrative surrounding the Japanese-Americans as they saw fit and to label them as treasonous regardless of their personal histories or convictions. During the Great Patriotic War, NKVD officers in Moscow, Almaty, and Kazakhstan’s provinces “objectified” the special-settlers in a similar manner. Through their surveillance reports, these NKVD officials attempted to nullify the voices of the deportees by ignoring or subverting any statements that contradicted the hegemonic narrative of treason.

As several chapters of this dissertation have argued, wartime Party and government leaders in Moscow and Almaty shared the goal of accelerating the integration of the Kazakhs into Soviet society to facilitate their mobilization as soldiers and workers. At the same time, these officials did everything they could to exclude the Soviet German and North Caucasian deportees from the broader Soviet milieu (see Chapter Five). The narratives of treason constructed by Soviet and Kazakh NKVD officers provided important ideological justification

⁹⁵ For the gradual liberalization and then abolishment of the special-settlement regime, see Siegelbaum, *Broad is My Native Land*, 330-331.

⁹⁶ Gordon Nakagawa, “Deformed Subjects, Docile Bodies: Disciplinary Practices and Subject-Constitution in Stories of Japanese-American Internment,” in Dennis K. Mumby (ed.) *Narrative and Social Control: Critical Perspectives* (Newbury Park, 1993), 143-163.

for this exclusion, even if these officers couched these narratives in the language of state security. Wartime NKVD descriptions of “anti-Soviet” elements inside Kazakhstan’s Slavic and Kazakh populations also provided ideological ammunition for the campaign to integrate these national groups in the republic’s society while excluding the special-settlers, albeit in a more subtle manner. By carefully disaggregating the Slavic and Kazakh communities into “friendly” and “hostile” socioeconomic groups, Soviet and Kazakh NKVD officers were suggesting that these populations were “normal” because they were subject to universal Marxist-Leninist laws concerning the development of class relations and the intensification of class conflict on the road to communism. These NKVD officers, in contrast, used an ethnic rather than sociological frame of reference to explain the “anti-Soviet” behaviors of the German and North Caucasian special-settlers. According to this narrative, these behaviors stemmed from an “anti-Soviet” mentality that was essentially unreformable, and this mentality necessitated the confinement of these groups to the special-settlements. In these ways, the imperatives of wartime mobilization and state security led to the further integration of some Soviet populations and the exclusion of others.

Conclusion

In his recent memoir, the late Great Patriotic War veteran Talghat Bigeldinov described his service as an Ilyushin pilot as part of the centuries-long struggle of the Kazakh people to defend their steppe from foreign invaders.⁹⁷ According to Bigeldinov, after 1941 there was no real distinction between protecting Kazakhstan on the one hand and the Soviet Union on the other. Both territories were his Motherland, and the defense of one logically implied the defense of the other. This sentiment is far from unique in post-Soviet Kazakhstan, and historians and politicians frequently articulate this position alongside frontline veterans.⁹⁸ World War II is an important component of contemporary Kazakhstani identity, but the characterization of the war as a combined Soviet-Kazakh effort emerged before 1991. The essential contours of this narrative took shape during the war itself as a direct result of the mobilizational policies of Soviet officials in Moscow and Almaty.

⁹⁷ Begel'dinov, *Pike v bessmertie*, 212.

⁹⁸ See for example Artem Istomin et al., "Nursultan Nazarbaev pozdravil veteranov s Dnem Pobedy," "24 KZ," <http://24.kz/ru/news/top-news/item/6320-nursultan-nazarbaev-pozd-veteranov>. Last accessed May 5, 2015.



Monument dedicated to the Panfilovites – mythical heroes of the Great Patriotic War. Photo by author (Almaty, Summer 2013)

The imperatives of total war, as well as the institutional and ideological culture of the Soviet Union during the 1930s, determined the scope and strategies of these mobilizational campaigns. The devastating personnel losses of the summer and fall of 1941 prompted the NKO to conscript the Kazakhs en masse, but throughout the war, the Soviet leadership demonstrated a profound reluctance to integrate Central Asians into frontline units because of their developmental “backwardness.” Soviet policies towards Kazakh soldiers were far from homogenous, however. PURKKA, despite its close institutional links to the NKO, did not see the conscription of the Kazakhs as a liability and used the war as an opportunity to spread Soviet

values among an entire generation of former *aul* dwellers. This discrepancy between NKO and PURKKA policies demonstrates that different Soviet institutions pursued different mobilizational strategies towards the Kazakhs. Whereas NKO and Red Army officers were mostly concerned with ensuring that Kazakh soldiers developed an effective capacity to fight, PURKKA officials and their Communist Party bosses demonstrated far more interest in the long-term objective of integrating the Kazakhs into the broader Soviet community.

This integrationist imperative was even more evident in the case of Soviet labor mobilization policies in Kazakhstan. From 1941 to 1945, the GKO, Soviet Communist Party, and other central organs strengthened their control over the republic's economy in general and over Kazakhstan's working populations in particular to boost economic production. This assertion of central economic control dovetailed with the Soviet leadership's longstanding goal of creating a unitary command economy that included the Central Asian republics, and the need to supply the front after the Nazi invasion accelerated the implementation of this goal. The leaders of the Kazakh Communist Party and Kazakh government resisted the imposition of central control, but they lost their room for negotiation once the Soviet leadership made the definitive decision to siphon personnel and resources from Kazakhstan to help reconstruct the economically devastated territories of the western Soviet Union. By the spring of 1945, Kazakhstan was once again relegated to the status it held in the 1930s as a supplier of food and industrial goods to the Soviet heartland west of the Urals.

The Kazakh Communist Party's wartime propaganda policies, like its economic policies, were very dependent on the strategic needs of the Soviet Union and the decisions of Soviet leaders in Moscow. For this reason, it is hardly coincidental that the Kazakh Communist Party's efforts to inspire the republic's collective farmers and workers to produce ever-larger quantities

of food and industrial goods opened another window for the integration of the Kazakhs into the broader Soviet community. The leaders of the Kazakh Communist Party lacked the personnel and resources to spread their message to the republic's distant *auls*, but Party propagandists succeeded in laying the ideological foundations for the inclusion of the vast Soviet Motherland in the imagined community of the Kazakhs. The question of whether Kazakhs accepted and adopted this refined interpretation of the Motherland requires additional research, but it is clear that the war accelerated the Communist Party's drive to create a hybrid Soviet-Kazakh identity. The wartime agitprop campaign inside Kazakhstan was an administrative failure, but it laid the seed for the flowering of a Sovietized Kazakh identity during the postwar period.

Overall, the efforts of Soviet leaders in Moscow and Kazakhstan to integrate the Kazakhs into Soviet military, economic, and ideological structures were extensions of already existing Bolshevik policies that received renewed impetus after 1941 because of the republic's importance to the war effort. This focus on Kazakhstan reveals that the war was not the universal caesura in Soviet history that Amir Weiner claims. Wartime mobilization accelerated the implementation of the Party-state's social, economic, and ideological programs in the republic, but it did not alter the ideological underpinnings or goals of these programs.⁹⁹ This is not to argue that the war left Kazakhstan unchanged, however. On the contrary, large-scale deportations to the republic from 1941 to 1945 profoundly altered the region's ethnic balance and led to the dramatic expansion of Kazakhstan's forced labor regime. At the same time that Soviet officials were attempting to integrate the Kazakhs into Soviet society, they were doing the exact opposite to the republic's Soviet Germans and North Caucasians. Soviet officials in Moscow and Kazakhstan, however, could not agree as to whether the basic goal of the special-

⁹⁹ Weiner, *Making Sense of War*.

settlement regime was exclusion or labor exploitation. As a result of this confusion and disagreement, these officials failed to accomplish either objective and they relegated the German and North Caucasian deportees to a hopelessly ambiguous position in Kazakhstan's society.

During the war, Kazakhstan's NKVD-administered special-settlement network expanded to unprecedented proportions, and so did the NKVD's control over the republic's non-repressed populations. The NKVD's wartime reign of terror was motivated, at least in part, by the belief that the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union had "activated" anti-Soviet fifth columns within the republic's Slavic, Kazakh, German, and North Caucasian populations. Soviet and Kazakh NKVD officers constructed several narratives that contextualized and justified these repressive campaigns and differentiated Kazakhstan's populations into "loyal" and "disloyal" population categories. When discussing Slavs and Kazakhs, NKVD reports associated disloyalty to the Soviet state with "hostile" socioeconomic and political groups that survived the terror of the late 1930s. These same NKVD officers constructed a narrative of treason that depicted the deported nationalities as irredeemably anti-Soviet. Through this narrative, the NKVD justified the existence of the special-settlement regime and the continued labor exploitation of the deportees.

Comparing the wartime fates of Kazakhstan's Slavic, Central Asian, and deported populations reveals that nationality and ethnicity were key factors that determined a Soviet citizen's place in society and his or her role in the war effort. From 1941 to 1945, the relative positions of Kazakhstan's national groups in the Soviet Union's national hierarchy shifted noticeably. The status of the Russians as the "leading nationality" of the Soviet Union and Kazakhstan became more pronounced than ever before, but at the same time, the battlefield and labor efforts of the Kazakhs prompted Soviet propagandists to emphasize that they too were key member of the Soviet multinational community. The position of the Germans, Chechens, and

Ingush in Soviet society was already imperiled before the war because these national groups were prime targets of NKVD surveillance and repression during the 1930s.¹⁰⁰ Their wartime deportation to the special-settlements, however, was a clear signal from the Soviet leadership that these groups occupied the bottom rung of the Soviet national hierarchy, a low status shared by the Balkars and Karachays. A focus on the wartime nationality policies of Party and government authorities in Kazakhstan reveals that the war did not lead to the “rearrangement” of the “fraternal family of Soviet nations” as Amir Weiner contends, but rather it made the boundaries of this hierarchy sharper and more pronounced.¹⁰¹

The consolidation of this national hierarchy reflected and reinforced a profound change in the ways Soviet officials in Moscow and Kazakhstan interpreted their developmentalist mission towards non-Russian national groups. Party and government officials accelerated this developmentalist campaign in a variety of respects during the war. NKO, PURKKA, and Kazakh Communist Party officials, for example, made it clear that they sought to bring the Kazakhs to a new cultural level by teaching them literacy, the Russian language, and the essential elements of Soviet ideology so they could become effective soldiers and workers. In this case, the imperatives of mobilization dovetailed with and reinforced the developmentalist ethos of Soviet leaders in Almaty and Moscow. At the same time, these authorities largely abandoned developmentalist policies towards the Soviet Germans and North Caucasians during the war because they assumed these groups to be irredeemably anti-Soviet. From 1941 to 1945, the single most important factor that determined the scope and content of conscription, economic, educational, and propaganda policies towards Kazakhstan’s national groups was

¹⁰⁰ For the pre-war repressive campaign against Soviet Germans, see *ibid*, 140-146.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, 7.

whether Soviet authorities perceived these groups to be loyal or disloyal to the Communist Party and Soviet government.

Recently, several historians of Russia and Central Asia have argued that one of the most important long-term consequences of the Great Patriotic War was that it engendered friction and alienation between Soviet society and the Soviet regime. According to these scholars, exposure to foreign countries during wartime military campaigns, the lessening of censorship, and the expectation that the Stalin regime would liberalize its rule in return for the sacrifices made by Soviet citizens prompted broad swaths of the population to question the Communist Party's monopoly on power and the ideological uniformity it promoted.¹⁰² The findings of this dissertation challenge this historiographical consensus by suggesting that wartime mobilization strengthened rather than weakened the institutional and ideological connections between Kazakhstan's populations and the Soviet Party-state. Kazakhstan entered the postwar period as an integral part of the Soviet Union, more so than it ever had been before. The connections between Kazakhstan and the rest of the Soviet Union that the war strengthened, however, were not egalitarian in nature. On the contrary, wartime mobilization accentuated the dominant position of Slavs over Kazakhs as well as the republic's economic subordination to Russia. During the next fifty years, Kazakhstan's status as an integral Soviet republic and as a region

¹⁰² See especially Elena Zubkova, *Russia After the War: Hopes, Illusions, and Disappointments, 1945-1957* (Armonk, 1998). In a similar vein, Catherine Merridale argues that the war ultimately fragmented Russian society by destroying families, generating antagonism between soldiers and civilians, inducing competition between veterans and non-veterans, and increasing the gulf of expectation between Stalinist leaders and Russians who wished for these Party and government officials to liberalize the Soviet system in return for their wartime sacrifices. Merridale, *Ivan's War*. The historian of Central Asia Paul Stronski maintains that the war had a similar impact on Central Asia, arguing that wartime evacuations and deportations generated enormous ethnic conflict in the republic that contributed to the "fraying" of the social fabric in Tashkent. Stronski, *Tashkent: Forging a Soviet City, 1930-1966* (Pittsburgh, 2010), 72-144. In Stronski's estimation, the "declarations of a happy Soviet future" made by Soviet authorities as part of their wartime propaganda campaign "likely sowed the seeds of future dissatisfaction among many residents who, through personal and familial sacrifice, had begun to identify more closely with the socialist system during the war years[.]" Ibid, 144.

fully subordinated to Russian military and economic interests would frame its social and economic development. At the same time, Kazakhstan's wartime status as a mighty "fortress of the Soviet home front" would serve as a potent symbol of a Soviet identity shared with the many peoples constituting the vast Soviet space.

Appendix: Sample Kazakh Communist Party Report on Labor Mobilization and Propaganda

[Translated from Russian.]

TO THE SECRETARIES OF ALL PROVINCIAL AND DISTRICT COMMITTEES OF
THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF KAZAKHSTAN

TOP SECRET

SUBJECT TO RETURN TO THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE COMMUNIST
PARTY OF KAZAKHSTAN BY NOVEMBER 1· 1942.

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan has become aware that enemy elements on a number of collective and state farms in the republic, taking advantage of the weakness of mass-agitation work and the insufficient vigilance of primary Party organizations and individual communists, are illegally conducting their hostile, anti-Soviet work in order to delay collection of the harvest.

We also know that enemy elements are spreading provocational rumors among collective farmers claiming that the Soviet state is planning to seize the entire harvest from them and that the establishment of the bread fund for the Red Army will not leave them with a single kilogram of bread.

The dissemination of these kinds of provocational rumors and other kinds of anti-Soviet agitation by enemy elements is meant to convince collective farmers to shirk work, to ignore their output norms, to work less than their minimum number of workdays, and to ignore the struggle against grain losses during the harvest. Meanwhile, collected bread has been embezzled and concealed underground.

These pro-fascist swine utilize various approaches when conducting their sabotage-related activities, which are aimed at convincing collective farmers to engage in the elaborated anti-state and traitorous activities. For example, these enemy elements spread rumors to the effect that German troops have already seized the Caucasus and the Volga region, that fighting is already raging on the territory of Kazakhstan, that the Red Army is weaker than the German army, and that Soviet power will not survive for long.

In order to accomplish their criminal goals, enemy elements are also attempting to take advantage of the difficulties that have arisen with the provisioning of industrial goods (matches, salt, kerosene, and other goods) to the population by claiming that these shortfalls have resulted from the unwillingness of Soviet authorities to provide these necessary goods.

Enemy elements commonly utilize various blunders and disagreements that occur on collective and state farms (such as when brigade leaders do not supply good quality drinking water to their brigades, when cooks do not prepare high-quality meals, etc.) in order to arouse dissatisfaction with Soviet power and the collective farm system among collective farmers, state farm workers, and MTS workers.

Enemy elements are attempting to discredit collective farmers who through their honest, conscientious, and selfless labor not only fulfill but also over-fulfill their established output norms.

An inspection conducted by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan has established that the anti-Soviet, enemy activities of these pro-fascist elements are being conducted in those locations where our Bolshevik mass-agitation work is being conducted at a low level, where this work does not evince a concrete or genuine character, where agitators are not coping with their assignments, and where agitators ignore the enemy activities of anti-Soviet elements. These agitators consider these enemy activities to be nothing more than manifestations of the backward views and attitudes of a minority of collective farmers and do not notice that enemy elements are actively attempting to disrupt the harvest collection and the gathering of agricultural products to undermine the economic might of our home front and weaken our Red Army, which is heroically fighting against the German fascist invaders.

The directors of Party organizations must keep in mind that there may be honest collective farmers among the disseminators of provocational rumors who conduct these activities due to a lack of consciousness and because of their own backwardness. The task of agitators in respect to these citizens consists in immediately explaining to them and instilling in their consciousness the idea that by utilizing and disseminating provocational rumors, they are providing a service to the enemy of our Motherland and are themselves standing in the camp of enemy anti-Soviet elements. It is necessary to tirelessly explain to collective farmers [*kolkhoznikam, kolkhoznitsam*] and to MTS and state farm workers [*rabochim i robotnitsam*] the reasons why enemy elements disseminate provocational rumors and call on these collective farmers and workers to struggle against these rumormongers while instructing them to unmask the bestial visage of pro-fascist spies.

In connection with this, Party organizations are obligated to pursue the following objective – to smash [*razbit'*] the anti-Soviet and anti-collective farm agitation of enemy elements and nip the smallest manifestations of these activities in the bud. Party organizations are to utilize all the strength of Bolshevik agitation and the laws of the Soviet state to accomplish this task.

It is essential to decisively strengthen mass-agitation work among collective farmers, state farm and MTS workers, as well as among the entire population that is engaged in agricultural work on collective farms, state farms, and in MTSs. At present, the central issues informing mass-agitation work in the village revolve around gathering the harvest in the shortest time

possible and not allowing the loss of any grain whatsoever. The work of all agitators among those involved in collecting the harvest must be subordinated to these goals.

In their mass-agitation work on collective farms, state farms and in MTSs, agitators cannot just hold meetings dedicated to current events and political topics and read communiqués from the Sovinformburo out loud. Agitators must also popularize the results of [socialist] competitions between [field] teams and brigades and fully develop these socialist competitions within brigades. Agitators should popularize the forms and labor methods of exemplary collective farmers, state farmers, and MTS workers.

Through their mass-agitation work, these agitators must ensure that there is not a single labor-capable member of a collective farm who is not working the required minimum number of workdays. Agitators are obligated to assist brigade leaders in eliminating all the defects hampering the work of their brigades. Agitators are also obligated through their Bolshevik words and actions to tirelessly recruit collective farmers for a merciless struggle against the sorties [*vylazkami*] of enemy agents. Agitators must also assist collective farmers in exposing the counterrevolutionary essence of enemy elements, exposing whiners [*nytikov*], those that panic, provocateurs, idlers, and the negligent, and firmly striking at [*bit'*] the enemy and frustrating his calculations, which are aimed at disrupting the bread harvest and weakening the might of the Soviet home front.

In particular, agitators must explain the goal and meaning of the Red Army bread fund to collective farmers, explaining that this fund will in no way lead to a reduction in pay compared to last year. Agitators must explain that if collective farmers work conscientiously at gathering a rich harvest, the majority of collective farmers will not receive less bread this year than they did last year. This is because this year the sown area of the collective farm-peasant sector of the republic increased significantly in comparison to previous years, which will lead to an increase in the collection of grain by almost 27 million poods [442.26 million kilograms]. This year's plan for bread deliveries to the state and the collection of bread for the Red Army fund is only 5 million poods [approximately 81.9 million kilograms] greater than during 1941.

District committees of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan should assist agitators with this crucial and honorable work.

THE SECRETARY OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY
(BOLSHEVIKS) OF KAZAKHSTAN, N. SKVORTSOV

SEPTEMBER 10, 1942

Source: APRK f. 708, o. 6, d. 1418a, l. 28-32.

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- Cadres Section
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- Section for Work Among Women
- Coal Industry Section
- Section for Non-Ferrous Metallurgy
- Section for the Oil Industry
- Organizational-Instructional Section

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